DRAVIDA

1151

(A History of the Tamils)

From Pre-historic Times to A.D. 1800

By
E. L. TAMBIMUTTU

With a Foreword
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1945

FOREWORD

It is with much pleasure that I accept Mr. Tambimuttu's invitation to me to write a foreword to his book DRAVIDA. In a short compass he has managed to tell the story of the Tamil countries and their civilization in a very readable and interesting manner. He has read widely and writes with clarity and precision. He follows the best authorities accessible to him and his narration is marked by an admirable sense of proportion. His illustrations, few as they are, are well chosen and the cultural side of our history receives adequate attention.

History can never attain a totally objective standpoint even if any science can ; and Mr. Tambimuttu's work is necessarily to some extent an expression of his personality. It is possible that the reader occasionally comes across opinions and estimates he does not readily accept ; but every one who reads this little book, I hope there will be many who do so, will readily recognise that the author has fulfilled with great ability the difficult task he imposed on himself of producing a short history of South India for the general reader. On the whole he has successfully resisted the temptation to read present disputes into the past to the extent of obscuring its real character, and he deserves a word of commendation.

This is the first book I have seen which seeks to satisfy a want that has been felt for some years, viz., a history of South India as a whole, and not merely of any single dynasty or of a particular period. I hope that scholars in our schools and colleges will find good use for it as also the general reader.

K. A. NILAKANTA SASTRI.

University of Madras,
2nd February, 1943.

1151

PREFACE

It is my earnest wish that all Tamils should possess a sound knowledge of their great past. The average Tamil, even if educated, is far too culpably ignorant of the proud heritage of their race. I however realised that most people have neither the time nor the inclination to study great research works such as those produced by scholars during the past twenty-five years or more as these are multiplying rapidly. It is especially for the benefit of this large class that I have compiled this little book. I am conscious of the limitations of my own scholarship in a historical field of such extensive and almost bewildering ramifications, and my sincere thanks are therefore due to Rev. Father Gnana Pirakasar, Swami Vipulananda and Professor K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, M.A., whose helpful advice and encouraging words urged me on to finish the task that I had undertaken.

My sincere thanks are also due to Mr. Q. Delilkhan for having read through the proofs and to Mr. S. Sivapathasunderam for having helped me with some illustrations.

I shall consider my labour well rewarded if this little work would rouse in the reader the desire to know more.

E. L. T.

Wellawatte,
10-9-45.

CONTENTS

PART I

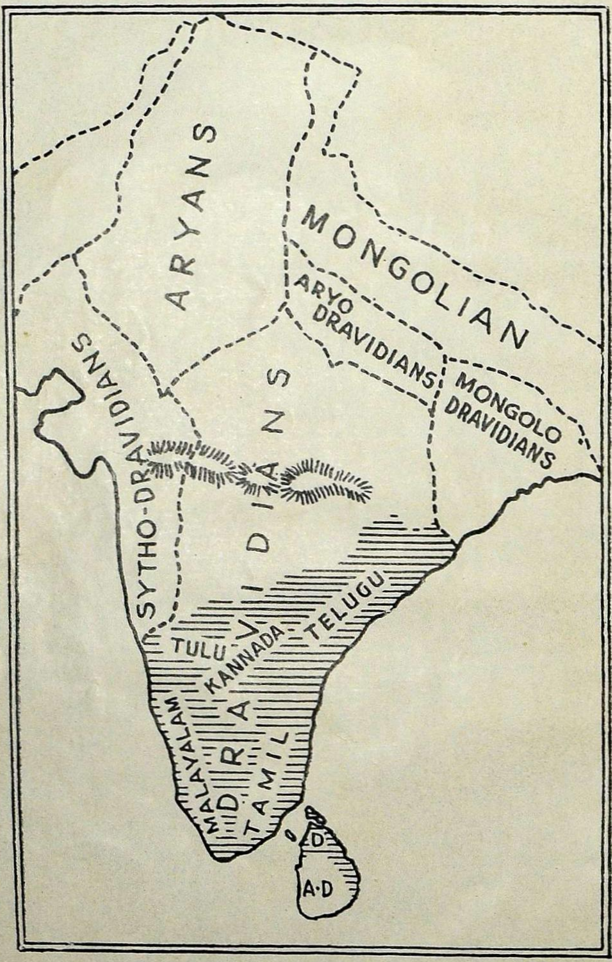
CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Pre-historic Times	1
II.	The Coming of the Aryans	4
III.	Aryavartha and Dakshinapada	7
IV.	Landmarks of History (*B.C. 600 to the Christian Era*)	11
V.	History of Tamil Literature (*From the Earliest Times to A.D. 600*)	14
VI.	Works of the Last Sangam	18
VII.	Tamil Kings of the Sangam Period...	24
VIII.	The Political History of Dravida (*A.D. 300-900*)	32
IX.	The History of Tamil Literature (*From A.D. 600-900*)	40

PART II

I.	The Chola Empire	43
II.	The Cholas and the Pandyans (*A.D. 1070-1216*)	52
III.	The Pandyan Empire, 1216-1310	56
IV.	The Decline and Fall of the Tamil Dynasties	60
V.	Tamil Literature Under the Later Cholas and Pandyans	64
VI.	The Nayaka Dynasty and the British	65
	Bibliography	71
	Index	72

List of Illustrations

	Facing Page
Races of India	1
A Seal of the Mohan-jo-Daro Period Pre-historic Burial Urn }	2
Harps in use among the Tamils during the Sangam Age ...	16
India during the Last Sangam	22
The Pandyan & Pallava Empires	30
Ruined City of Mahabalipuram	33
Mahendra Varman A Dancing Girl of the Same Period }	34
Madura Temple	41
The Chola Empire	43
Raja-Raja's Temple, Tanjore	46
Tanjore Temple	54
Palace of the Nayaka Dynasty, Madura	65
Tank and Pleasure Garden, Madura	67



RACES OF INDIA

CHAPTER I

Pre-historic Times

India, often described as a sub-continent, is a country nearly as large as Europe and like Europe is the home of several nationalities (now called linguistic groups) each with a language, culture and political history of its own. The Pathans, Punjabis and Rajputs of the North, the Gujaratis and Maharattas of the West, the Bengalees and Biharis of the East, the Andhras, Kannadas, Tamils and Malayalees of the South, and even the Sinhalese whose home is Ceylon, are all children of Mother India.

The Peoples and Races of India

They are all descended from the various races that, from the remotest past, had invaded India and settled down in this country. Of these the most important are the Dravidians, Aryans and the Islamic races. The Dravidians and the Aryans are Hindus by religion, and they are often classed as a single community for political purposes. The Islamic races consist of Arabs, Turks, Afghans and Mongols. They are of course Muslims and they have been largely supplemented by converts from Hinduism. The other religious groups such as the Buddhists, Jains and Christians are all converts from Hinduism and therefore belong either to the Dravidian or the Aryan races.

The Dravidian Race and Its Distribution

The Dravidians who represent the most ancient civilized population of India occupy practically the entire peninsula. Even the population of the North-Eastern and Western regions are found to be of mixed Aryo-Dravidian, Mongolo-Dravidian and Sytho-Dravidian origin (Fig. 1). The Aryans though numerically inferior, have considerably strengthened their position by spreading their language and culture and thus weaning many Dravidian tribes from the parent stock. They predominate in the North. The Muslims, scattered all over India, are loudly clamouring for a national home in certain parts of North India where they are in a majority.

Some well-meaning people say that neither the Dravidian nor the Aryan race exists today in India, and that these names merely refer to linguistic groups. No doubt both races have now lost much of their purity by years of intermixture, and a common religion has also had its share in minimising their differences. Nevertheless to suggest that they have now fused into a single race is far from the truth.

In the North-West, now outside India proper, there still exists a Dravidian dialect called Brahui. In the Indus Valley, archaeological excavations have brought to light the remains of several pre-historic cities of Dravidian origin at least 5,000 years old. These facts are sufficient to show that at one time—about five thousand years ago perhaps—the whole of India was under the sway of the Dravidian race. Today Dravidians who still speak Dravidian languages, such as Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam and Tulu are really a minority and are confined to the Madras Presidency including the Cochin, Travancore and Pudukotta States, Mysore and parts of Hyderabad States.

The Northern and Eastern Provinces of Ceylon where the Ceylon Tamils live should also be considered part of the modern Dravidian country.

The word "Dravidian" is derived from the Aryan word "Dravida" or "Dramila" which are found to be only corruptions of the name Tamil.

Origin of the Dravidian Race

The origin of the Tamil or Dravidian race is lost in the mist of hoary antiquity. There are many strange stories and conflicting theories about it. The presence of numerous aboriginal tribes in the hilly and jungle regions of India and Ceylon suggest that the Dravidians had at some remote period entered India as invaders. They might have driven the uncivilized aborigines into the hills and forests and settled down in the fertile valleys and alluvial plains where they built up great civilizations in course of time, such as the one discovered in the Indus Valley. In North India, the pre-historic civilization of the Dravidians, was either destroyed or absorbed by later invaders. In peninsular India, however, especially in the extreme South, where the Dravidian civilization flourished well into historic times, a gradual blending of the aboriginal lithic culture and the Iron-age civilization of the Tamils has been noticed. It is possible therefore that the Dravidians absorbed a considerable portion of the indigenous population. This process of absorption can be noticed even today in South India and Ceylon where the Veddahs, Irulas and others are slowly merging into the civilized population.

The Sumerians

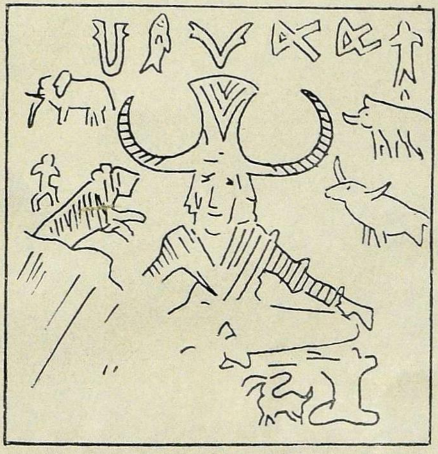
Till about the second millennium before Christ, there lived in the country now called Iraq, a people known as the Sumerians Their buried cities have now been unearthed, and it was believed that they were the earliest and the best-known example of a race or people who were undoubtedly the pioneers of human civilization. No less an authority than Dr. Hall has pointed out that these Sumerians closely resembled the Hindus of South India—*i.e.* the Dravidians. Many think therefore that the forefathers of the Dravidians migrated to India from the region of ancient Sumeria.

Indus Valley

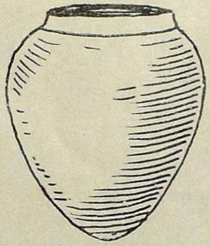
Recent archaeological discoveries in the Indus Valley have brought to light the great similarity between the pre-historic culture of India and that of Sumeria. But at the same time they have helped us to put back the beginnings of civilization in India to such a remote period that it sounds unreasonable to give it a Sumerian origin. It is more likely that these were contemporary civilizations of a kindred race.

Pre-historic Burial Custom

One of the peculiar customs of pre-historic people was the burying of their dead in earthenware jars or urns. This type of burial with local variations was common to both the Sumerians and the Dravidians, but quite foreign to the Aryans and others who later found a home in India. Numerous burial urns were discovered in Sindh and in the Indus Valley, and they are no doubt relics of the days when Dravidians occupied this region. In South India this custom survived up to the early centuries of the Christian era and there is reference in Tamil literature to the urn-burial given to a Chola king named Killi-Valavan. Although no major archaeological excavations have yet been undertaken in South India, several accidental discoveries have been made. Among them the most significant is an ancient cemetery containing thousands of burial urns, discovered in Tinnevelly along the bank of the Tambraparani river. From time to time, workmen engaged in building



A SEAL OF THE
MOHAN-JO-DARO PERIOD



PRE-HISTORIC BURIAL URN

operations have also come across burial-urns practically everywhere in the Madras Presidency. The Tamils were perhaps the last of the Dravidians to give up this custom.

Indus Valley Civilization

The Indus Valley Dravidians of pre-historic times had reached a very high state of civilization when they were overwhelmed by a less civilized race. Both archaeological evidence and the recorded observations of the Aryan invaders point to the fact that the Dravidian cities consisted of hundreds of buildings, some many stories high. Even the common people are found to have lived in well-built houses provided with water and drainage. They knew how to work in metals and manufactured glass and pottery of many designs. A bronze statuette found at Mohan-jo-Daro was recognized as that of a dancing girl very much resembling her modern sisters of South India. These pre-historic people also possessed a system of writing now known as pictograph characters. Inscriptions discovered in the Indus Valley are still being studied by scholars with a view to deciphering them. It is possible that this form of writing was common to all Dravidians, although no discovery in support of this has yet been made in South India.

Pre-historic Dravidian Religious Cults

Modern Dravidians are of course Hindus, but Hinduism is not a religion in the same sense as Christianity or Islam. It was not founded by a single individual teacher. It really represents the accumulated wisdom of the two races—the Dravidian and the Aryan—collected together during a period of at least fifty centuries. There are two main schools of Hinduism—Vaisnavism and Saivism. In a very broad sense it can be said that Saivism is founded on the pre-historic religious cults of the Dravidians. Even today Saivism is the popular religion of the great Dravidian population of South India and North Ceylon, and it is a significant fact that it was in the Tamil country that this cult developed into the Sidhanta philosophy.

In the seals discovered at Mohan-jo-Daro can be seen the figures of birds and animals drawn around a man seated cross-legged. The figure, though only in outline, bears much resemblance to the popular conception of Siva. Some authorities like Rev. Father Heras are of opinion that the man represents the prototype of Siva, and the objects around him the emblems of the various totemistic tribes into which the Dravidians were then divided. Siva in the symbolic form of the "lingam" was also worshipped by pre-historic Dravidians just as their descendants do today. These pre-Aryan inhabitants of North India excelled not only in arts and crafts but they also knew a good deal about astronomy, medicine and other sciences. Their knowledge of diseases peculiar to the Indian climate and the efficacy of indigenous herbs must really have been great. The Aryans, it is said, took up the study of these subjects mainly as a result of their contact with the non-Aryan native tribes. The extant Sanscrit works on these subjects are no doubt the fruits of this cultural contact (Mukerji's Hindu Civilization). This advanced civilization discovered in the Indus Valley could not have been peculiar to this region ~~only~~. The Dravidians of the South must have been equally civilized and cultured. In the next few chapters we shall see how far Tamil tradition and literature support this claim.

CHAPTER II

The Coming of the Aryans

The pre-historic civilization of the Dravidians is the bed-rock or foundation on which every invader of India from the Vedic Aryans to the modern Europeans built or tried to build their own cultural edifices. Like the foundation of a building, this foundation of Indian culture is not seen by the casual observer, and has therefore been completely forgotten. The various superstructures that have risen on this foundation, from the coming of the Aryans to the consolidation of British power in India, have all been studied and admired, but little do we know about the foundation laid by our pre-historic ancestors that now lies buried deep in the sands of time.

We have seen how more than five thousand years ago India was a civilized country. Contemporary civilizations also flourished in Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Egypt and other countries of the Near East. All these countries were then inhabited by people more or less inter-related, and their customs and beliefs too had much in common. The Dravidians of South India are the direct descendants of this race. Between the third and the fourth millenniums before Christ a race of fair-skinned people, whose home is believed to have been somewhere in Central Asia, began to over-run Europe in the West, and the then civilized countries in the South.

In Europe, they easily overcame the aboriginal tribes, and established themselves in the North. Today their descendants proudly call themselves the Nordic race. At that time however they were little better than the indigenous tribes whom they had displaced. They were more or less half-civilized and worshipped numerous gods who were but personifications of Nature. Some tribes belonging to the same race found their way southwards and little by little overcame the civilized people of the Mediterranean countries. They absorbed the conquered people and their cultures, and in course of time developed a grander civilization than the one they had destroyed. This new civilization reached its zenith in Greece and in the islands of the Aegean Sea. From here it found its way to the Italian Peninsula where it grew into the great Roman Civilization. The Romans under Constantine the Great, their Emperor (A.D. 284-305), accepted Christianity as their state religion, and soon Christian missionaries from Rome spread the religion and culture of Southern Europe into the countries of North Europe including the British Isles. Until they accepted Christianity the South Europeans too were worshippers of Nature Gods and Goddesses, and their deities such as Appollo, Mars, Jupiter and others are only too well-known.

Aryans in India

This fair-skinned race who invaded Europe and the countries around the Mediterranean Sea, began to arrive in India about the same period. Here they called themselves "Aryans," a name by which the whole race is now known.

We have seen how the Aryans migrated to different countries and different climes. Consequently they became separated and each unit developed in its own way. Nevertheless the various languages they speak today can be traced to a common origin. They are now referred to as the Aryan family. We should not however think that all those who speak

languages belonging to the Aryan family are also Aryans by race. It is a well-known fact that the Aryans forced their language on all the conquered nations. Even the unconquered people were greatly influenced by them.

The Vedic Age

The first wave of Aryan immigration coming through the North-West did not spread South of the Sutlej and Jumna rivers. In the region to the North of these rivers the Aryans first settled down. In course of time more and more of Aryan tribes began to arrive, and naturally they began to spread towards the South always keeping along the rich and fertile banks of the two great rivers, the Indus and the Ganges.

They remained a semi-nomadic people for a long time, depending on their cattle and, like their European kinsmen, they worshipped numerous Nature Gods such as Suriya (sun), Agni (fire), Vayu (wind) and a horde of other powers. They also possessed a number of H ero-Gods, the chief of whom was Indra.

The rich and fertile country which now became their home, by and by changed them into an ambitious and aggressive race. They were quick to learn and adopt the ways of the civilized natives, but at the same time they spurned the indigenous people and sought to dominate them. This no doubt led to a long-drawn out struggle between the two races.

The life led by these early Aryans in their new home with the natives opposing them at every step, their fears and their hopes, are all well portrayed in the hymns of the Rig Veda, believed to have been sung by Aryan Rishis (holy men) during this period. Whatever hidden meanings philosophers of later times may have discovered in the Rig Vedic hymns, they are, first and primarily, simple outbursts of praise and thanksgiving to the Gods for favours received, and humble supplications for further help of a more or less political nature.

Indra was perhaps the earliest of their Hero-Gods, and it is to him that most of the Vedic hymns are addressed. The natives were divided into numerous tribes, the more advanced of whom lived in well fortified citadels. They do not appear to have united together in their struggle against the Aryans. The invaders therefore conquered them tribe by tribe. The Rig Veda 4-30-20, gives thanks to Indra for the defeat of Samparan, the king of the Dasyu tribe, and the destruction of his citadels. Another hymn, Rig Veda 1-33-4, requests Indra to destroy the Dasyus, who are described as non-believers in Vedic sacrifices. Yet another verse 4-30-21 refers to the treacherous slaying of thirty thousand Dasyus.

From these hymns we learn that the Aryan invaders found the natives rich and powerful, enjoying a high standard of material comfort. Their cities are described as containing hundreds of buildings—a fact now borne out by archaeological finds. The Aryans could not suppress their feelings of wonder and amazement at these great cities of their enemies, and it is quite evident that they learnt to build and live in cities from the conquered natives. The Vedic Aryans also brought new customs and manners into India. They cremated their dead, and considered the native custom of burial as something uncivilized, so much so that in course of time the Dravidians too began to adopt it. They also offered burnt-offerings of animals to their gods, and attributed various virtues to these sacrificial rites.

The Rig Veda 7-21-5 and 10-99-3 contemptuously refers to the Dasyu and other Dravidian tribes as worshippers of the phallus or lingam, which indicates that the Aryans did not at first look upon the religious cults of the natives with tolerance. The Dravidians spoke a natural language, avoiding all sounds that unduly tax the larynx, a feature still preserved in Tamil (some think that this is a phonetical deficiency) and the Aryans have therefore ridiculed the native dialects as unintelligible.

The next stage in the struggle between the two races is often referred to as the Puranic Age. The Puranas or ancient stories, though committed to writing in historical times, contain legends thousands of years old. Both the Aryans and the Dravidians preserved stories of their own exploits, but in later days when both had settled down as friendly neighbours, these stories began to get mixed up a great deal. They were committed to writing by religious men who did not view them from a political angle. Their idea was to propagate religion through these stories, and consequently they are found to be highly exaggerated, and mostly favourable to the Aryans.

The Puranic Age

The natives who are still described as rich and powerful, in spite of their having lost a great part of North India, are referred to as Asuras and Rakshas. We notice that by this time the two races had borrowed a good deal from each other, and, although they were politically antagonistic, their customs and beliefs had much in common. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that many centuries separated the Vedic from the Puranic Age.

The fighting between the two races had developed from local tribal conflicts to one of an all-India scale. On more than one occasion the Aryans were in danger of being completely wiped out. Whenever the Asuras and the Rakshas gained the upper hand they treated the Aryan interlopers with scant mercy, so much so, that their names have come down to us as personifications of barbaric ferocity. But in spite of all their war-like qualities, the native tribes who were very much disunited were forced southwards little by little. In course of time the whole of North India fell into Aryan hands. The Puranas tell us that an Aryan Prince named Skanda defeated the Asuras and drove them to the extreme South. Likewise some centuries later, Rama, with the help of certain non-Aryan tribes of South India, invaded Ceylon and defeated the Rakshasa King Ravana. These stories may be true or not; nevertheless they show us that the Aryans finally overcame the opposition of the natives and wrested from them the entire country North of the Vindhya Mountains. Their conquest and consolidation of North India was an extremely slow process, but this gave them sufficient time to absorb the conquered people, so that they (the non-Aryans) began to identify themselves with their conquerors and ceased to give trouble.

CHAPTER III

Towards the end of the Puranic Period, that is, about B. C. 1000, the Aryans had consolidated their power in North India and named the vast country bounded on the North by the Himalayas and on the South by the Vindhya mountains, Aryavartha. Peninsular India now became the home of the independent Dravidian nations, and it came to be known as Dakshinapada or the Southern Country.

Aryavartha and Dakshinapada

Both Aryavartha and Dakshina were divided into numerous kingdoms; some large and powerful, others petty and almost unknown. Kuru, Panchala, Kosala and Magadha were some of the more powerful of the Aryan kingdoms. In Dakshina, the great plateau that stretched from the Vindhyas to the hills of Mysore was inhabited by Dravidian tribes who were the forefathers of the Telugu speaking Andhras of today. We know little or nothing about the Dravidian Kingdoms that flourished in this region, because most of them lost their identity in the process of aryanization that overtook them. The kingdoms of Kalinga and Telingana, situated on the East coast, were perhaps the only ones that survived till mediaeval times. They now form the Andhra districts of the Madras Presidency.

Kingdoms of Aryavartha and Dakshinapada

Between the Deccan plateau and the Southern plains was the hill country of Karunadu (Mysore). The Karunaders or Kannadas as they are known today, were composed of several war-like Dravidian tribes. Chola, Chera and Pandya were the chief kingdoms of the Southern plains. These were the last to come under Aryan influence, and it is here that the ancient civilization of the Dravidians survives to this day with some semblance of purity.

We lose sight of the island of Ceylon for a considerable period since the defeat and death of Ravana. The position of the Rakshasas appears to have gradually deteriorated, until some centuries later the island fell into the hands of the Nagas, who though considered an aboriginal tribe, were quite a civilized people. Several Naga kingdoms flourished in the island till about the 5th century B.C.

Ilum or Lanka

By about B.C. 1000, the Vedic cult of the Aryans had considerably changed. The simple faith of a pastoral people had now developed into a complicated ritualistic religion, known as Brahminism, or Brahminical Hinduism today. From the hands of the great Rishis religion had passed into the hands of a class or caste, who considered themselves the last stage in evolution.

Brahminical Hinduism

Most of the Aryan heroes such as Skanda and Rama had by this time been raised to the position of Gods or incarnations of God. Even non-Aryans, such as Hanuman and Vibhushana were deified, though placed in a lower scale.

In the process of absorbing the conquered people the Aryans found it necessary to accept the worship of Siva and the lingam. In fact some Aryans became ardent converts to Dravidian cults. Nevertheless, in general, Dravidian culture and language had to accept a subordinate position in

Aryavartha. A civilized race like the Dravidians must have contributed much towards the building up of the so-called Aryan civilization of North India. Centuries later when the Aryans tried to introduce their culture into the unconquered Tamil country they found that much of what passed off as Aryan culture in the North already existed in the South. This, no doubt, indicates to what extent the conquered Dravidians of the North had helped in building up the so-called Indo-Aryan civilization.

By slow degrees the Aryans had evolved a social order to suit their own needs. The direct successors of the Vedic Rishis were the priest class called the Brahmans. They were the custodians of the Vedas and all such Aryan learning and wisdom. They alone possessed the right to perform all religious and social ceremonies. Their influence over the rest was therefore very great, and they occupied the highest place in society. Next came the Kshatriya or the military caste. They were rulers of the country, but had no jurisdiction over the Brahmans (Y. Veda-9-40). The third was the Vaisya caste. They were the merchants and traders. These three constituted the main Aryan society. The conquered people who had accepted Aryan culture formed a fourth group called the Sudras. They were the workers. In fact they had to do all menial work and into the bargain were refused even the ordinary rights of citizenship. They were kept down in every way, and condemned to eternal servitude.

The Aryan Caste System

Some of the non-Aryan tribes however refused to have anything to do with the Aryans and remained aloof in the fastnesses of the hills and mountains. They thus remained outside the Aryan fold and were naturally outlawed, and step by step driven into the living hell called untouchability.

The Outcasts and Untouchables

In the Mahabharatha it is written that in ancient days a Rishi named Agastiya crossed the Vindhya mountains, into the Southern country. It is said that he was the first Aryan to accomplish this, and it is described that before him the Vindhyas effectively obstructed the path of the Sun and the Moon, obviously a reference to the failure of Aryan kings, all of whom trace their descent to the Sun or the Moon, to carry their conquests south of the Vindhyas. Agastiya's mission was no doubt a peaceful one, for it is said that the Vindhya itself gave him permission to cross over!

Aryan Infiltration into Dakshinapada

In the Ramayana however we find more details about this first Aryan settler in Dakshinapada. Members of this Agastiya family appear to have settled down in three different parts of Dakshinapada; one on the bank of the Godaveri (Ibid 3) another in the Pothiya Hill in Pandya (Ibid 4, 49) and a third in Ceylon (Ibid 4, 41). Other Aryans must have followed the Agastiyas, and settled down in various parts of the Dravidian country. Indeed the Dravidian kings received them well, and gave them every facility to follow their own customs and manners. Most of these Aryan settlers were no doubt Brahman missionaries whose one and only aim was to spread their religion. Perhaps like all missionaries, they sincerely believed that they were bringing culture and civilization to a heathen race! We know how the European Christian missionaries came to India in the sincere belief that the Indians needed the civilizing influence of their religion. This perhaps was the attitude of the Brahmans who settled down in the Dravidian

country. The kingdoms of the Deccan being closest to Aryavartha, came under the early attention of these Brahmans. The spread of Brahminism in the Deccan resulted in the aryanization of the people. The caste-system, as well as Aryan customs and beliefs, soon became well established among the Deccan Dravidians. Their language too rapidly changed by taking in Aryan words. Thus they began to drift away from their kinsmen of the South, the Karunaders, Cholas, Cheras and Pandyans, who began to be referred to as Dravidas or Dramilas (Tamils).

About B.C. 700, Brahmans began to arrive in large numbers in Dravida or the Tamil country. The kingdoms of Chola, Chera and Pandya were very ancient ones. Perhaps they existed even before the coming of the Aryans. They are mentioned in the Ramayana and the Mahabharatha, in connection with events that took place at least two to three thousand years before Christ. These might be later interpolations; nevertheless the extreme antiquity of these kingdoms has never been questioned. They were highly developed in all directions. The Dravidian or Tamil language as spoken in these three kingdoms had by this time reached a very high state of literary excellence. The Tamils were very proud of their ancient language and civilization. Perhaps they realized that their country was now the last stronghold of the Dravidian race. They called their language Sen-Tamil (cultured) to differentiate it from less developed dialects that existed in other parts of the Dravidian country. Sen-Tamil itself was divided into Iyal, Isai and Nataka Tamil, which shows that the language was highly developed in literature, music and drama. The Brahman missionaries in Dravida therefore found that they had more to learn than to teach. Just as Christian missionaries such as "Veera-Mamuni" and Dr. Pope studied Tamil and wrote extensively in this language, so did the Brahmans of old. It is a significant fact that just as Dr. Pope wrote a grammar of the Tamil language, so did the first Aryan missionary, Rishi Agastiya.

Brahmans in Dravida

The Brahmans mixed freely with the great Tamil poets and panars of those times and composed poetry according to the best literary traditions of the Tamils. Thus they proved an asset to the people among whom they had settled. It must be noted however that Brahmans were the custodians of all learning in Aryavartha, and this position they sought to win for themselves in Dravida too. In this they succeeded to a great extent and it gave them the opportunity to import Sanscrit words and literary styles into Tamil. Aryan beliefs and superstitions too gradually took hold of the Tamil people. The influence of the Brahmans grew with the times and Brahminism, modified to fit into existing cults, soon became well-established in Dravida. The Puranic stories were given a different meaning; it was explained to the Tamils that the Asuras and Rakshasas were really demons, giants and terrible monsters whom the Aryan gods had fought and destroyed, thus making the world a safe place for human beings! To satisfy the less credulous esoteric interpretations were found, showing how ultimately Good triumphed over Evil. There is ample proof that with the idea of accelerating the work of spreading Brahminism many learned Tamils were admitted into the Brahman fold. They are now known by various family names that indicate their Dravidian origin.

The Dravidians of Peninsular India, especially the Cholas, Cheras and Pandyans had, even before the advent of the Brahmans, developed a social system, where caste prejudice was absent and there was one law for all. Tribes living under similar conditions, and following kindred occupations, were naturally drawn towards each other. This in course of time led to the forming of five different groups, representative of the five different kinds of lands that went to make up the Tamil country. They were the Vellalas (farmers and tillers of the soil) who occupied the fertile alluvial plains, the Paradavars (merchants, fishermen and seafarers) who inhabited the coastal region; the Idayar (shepherds) who lived in the uncultivable scrub and grasslands; the Kuravar or hunters who roamed over the forest-clad hills of Eastern Ghats, and the Maravar or war-like robber clans of the sandy desert-like region of the extreme South.

The Caste System In Dravida

The attempt of the Brahmans to introduce the Aryan caste system into the Tamil country was never a success. The bulk of the people still call themselves by their occupational group names. The failure of the Tamils to adopt the Aryan system had its unfortunate results under British rule. In the census of 1921, over 94% of the population of the Madras Presidency was returned as Sudras and outcasts! As the British Government in India mainly administers "Hindu Law," the Tamils and other Dravidians have had to put up with all the injustices and social disabilities placed on the Sudra caste by the Aryan lawgiver Manu.

CHAPTER IV

In the storied past of India, the first landmark of history becomes visible only about B.C. 600, when there was born in North India, a great religious reformer named Mahavira. About this time, Brahminism which had penetrated even into Dravida, had become very corrupted. The Brahmans dwelt more on the ritualistic side of religion, and still offered sacrifices of animals to the Vedic gods. The caste-system, which gave an unfair advantage to the Brahmans over the rest, was strictly observed, and the Sudras and untouchables suffered untold miseries. The Brahmans had become all-powerful and they sometimes tyrannised even over kings. Many intelligent people must have realised that some sort of reform was necessary, but none had the courage to go against the powerful Brahmans.

Landmarks of History
(B.C. 600—to the Christian Era).

Mahavira, or the Jina as he is more popularly known, was the first to stand up against the corrupt practices of the Brahmans. He prohibited killing and taught that all life was sacred. He did not make any difference between an ant and a human being; much less between a Sudra and a Brahman.

Mahavira and Jainism

No doubt the orthodox Brahmans opposed Mahavira as a heretic. Nevertheless when he died about B.C. 527, he had a following of fourteen thousand adherents.

Soon after the Jina came Gautama, the Buddha. His life story is well known. Born a prince he renounced his throne and all worldly life, and founded the Buddhist religion. Buddhism too was a protest against the doctrines and practices of the Brahmans. Gautama too taught that all life was sacred, and differed from the Jina only in certain philosophical details. He too had to stand much opposition from the Brahmans, and he died about B.C. 480.

Gautama, the Buddha

It is said that on the same day that Gautama died, there landed in the Island of Ceylon a band of Aryan warriors, from either Bengal or Gujarat. According to the traditional story, seven hundred of them, including a prince named Vijaya, were banished from their homeland. Vijaya and his men ultimately became masters of the island, having subdued the Yakkas and the Nagas. Later they intermarried with the Tamils of Pandya, and thus laid the foundation of the Sinhalese nation. It is mentioned that large numbers of settlers came from Pandya. They belonged to the various artisan classes whose services were in demand in young Lanka. These early Tamil settlers have been supplemented almost throughout the 2500 years of this island's history by bands of Dravidian settlers from the mainland. A good proportion of these have no doubt been absorbed into the Sinhalese nation. The rest are known today as Ceylon Tamils.

Aryans In Ceylon

In B.C. 327, Alexander, king of Macedonia, and master of a vast empire that stretched from Greece to Persia, invaded India. He conquered a portion of Western Aryavartha, and returned home, leaving his Indian Empire in the hands of native rulers who had sworn allegiance to him.

The Maurya Emperors and the Tamil Country

Alexander died soon afterwards and a king named Chandragupta, who ruled over Magadha, took the opportunity to extend his kingdom. Eventually he brought the whole of Aryavartha under his rule.

After Chandragupta, his son Bindusara continued the work of conquest initiated by his father. Bindusara carried the war into Dakshina possibly for the first time since Puranic times. Bindusara's son Asoka was as war-like as his father and grandfather. He attacked Kalinga, the only Andhra kingdom that now remained independent. The immense loss of human lives that resulted in this war, it is said, made the Emperor feel disgusted with worldly power and drove him to seek refuge in the teachings of the Buddha.

It is sometimes pointed out that this conversion of Asoka saved the Tamil kingdoms from becoming mere provinces of the Mauryan Empire. We cannot be quite sure about this, because early Tamil literature makes mention of an unsuccessful attack by the Moriyar (Maurya?) on the northern borders of the Tamil country supported by Telugu troops. Nevertheless the whole of India now came under the influence of Buddhism. Asoka sent missions to every nation in India and even outside. Among his independent neighbours to whom he sent missions, he has particularly mentioned Chola, Chera and Pandya.

Though the Tamils no longer profess Buddhism, there is much evidence in Tamil literature, to show that Buddhism flourished in Dravida up to about the ninth century. Great Buddhist writers, such as Bodhidharma, Buddhadatta and Dharmapala, whose Sanscrit and Pali commentaries are even today considered to be authoritative, all hailed from the Tamil country.

Tamil Adventurers Seize Ceylon

We have seen that a considerable portion of the Sinhalese nation was made up of Tamil settlers. Apart from these there was a large floating population of Tamils, chiefly merchants and traders. Ceylon had not built up a foreign trade as yet, and the Tamil merchants who resided in Ceylon therefore took the produce of this island to the great ports of South India, such as Musiri, Korkai, Kayal and Puhar, which were well-known to the Greeks, Phoenicians and other sea-faring people of the Mediterranean countries. Thus as middlemen, the Tamil merchants made huge profits and became rich and powerful.

Horses from Arabia and other countries were usually brought to the ports of South India, and Tamil merchants held a virtual monopoly of this lucrative business. As horses were required by Indian kings for their armies, these horse dealers possessed much influence and were even able to interfere in local politics. About B.C. 177, two brothers named Sena and Guttika, the sons of a dealer in horses seized the Sinhalese throne, and forced King Asela to flee to the South for safety. They ruled for 15 years at the end of which Asela succeeded in defeating the usurpers.

Ellalan Conquers Ceylon

The success of Sena and Guttika showed how weak the Sinhalese were. Seventeen years later, in B.C. 145, a merchant more powerful than the two sons of the horse merchant, conceived the idea of becoming king of Ceylon. His name was Ellalan or Elara as the Sinhalese call him. He hailed from Chola. When Ellalan landed near Trincomalie with a powerful army and marched on Anuradhapura, King Asela once again fled for his life.

Ellalan was a very just and good ruler. As a king he proved to be one of the best that ever ruled over Ceylon. In fact even his enemies—the Sinhalese—are loud in his praise and have named him, Elara the Just.

King Ellalan was not a Buddhist, and in spite of the utmost care he took steps not to hurt the religious susceptibilities of his Buddhist subjects, incidents between his non-Buddhist soldiers and his Buddhist subjects could not have been altogether avoided. This often led to minor clashes and the Sinhalese outside Rajarata or the King's province, exploited these religious riots, and kept the spirit of revolt alive.

Nevertheless for 43 years the Sinhalese could not regain their kingdom. When Ellalan was almost in his dotage, a young Sinhalese Prince named Gamini started a religious crusade against the Tamil ruler. After many reverses, Gamini succeeded in capturing Anuradhapura, having killed the old warrior Ellalan in single combat.

In B.C. 44, Ceylon again went under Tamil rule. Seven Marava chiefs, more or less bent on plunder, invaded the island. King Valagambahu left his capital and took refuge among the southern hills. Two of the victorious Maravas returned home taking with them their share of the booty which must have been considerable, for King Gamini and his successors had spent much wealth in embellishing the city of Anuradhapura. The other five chiefs are believed to have occupied the throne, one after the other, in succession for about fifteen years in all. It is said that in their anxiety to become kings, one murdered the other and when the last of them was ruling, King Valagambahu attacked Anuradhapura and drove the Maravas out of the island.

Marava Chiefs Capture Ceylon

It should be noted that all these so-called invaders from the Tamil country were either petty chieftains or soldiers of fortune. The kings of the Tamil kingdoms do not appear to have taken any part in these invasions.

From about B.C. 50 to A.D. 250, the most powerful people in Europe were the Romans. Their empire extended from one end of Europe to the other, and they were also masters of Palestine and other Asiatic countries touching the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. It is noteworthy that the Tamil kings enjoyed most cordial relations with the Roman Emperors. For thousands of years the Tamils had maintained trade and commerce with the Mediterranean countries, and when the Romans came to power in Europe, Tamil kings sent embassies to Rome. Such an embassy is mentioned to have reached Rome in B.C. 20, sent by "King Pandion" to the Court of the Emperor Augustus. Tamil literature tells us that the great cities of Dravida were crowded with foreigners, and from descriptions given, we can easily distinguish the haughty Romans with their "stern and manly appearance wearing arms hidden beneath the folds of their togas." It is said that many of these foreigners were employed as guards by the Tamil kings. At Musiri, there existed a Temple of Augustus, and 1,200 soldiers were stationed there, no doubt to protect their commercial interests. Descriptions of early Tamil cities show that the walls and battlements were mounted with catapults and various mechanical devices similar to those used by the Romans.

Romans in Dravida

Trade and commerce between the Tamils and the Romans must have continued up to the end of the second century, as Roman coins belonging to this period have been unearthed in very large quantities, especially at Madura

CHAPTER V

History of Tamil Literature
(From the Earliest Times to A.D. 600)

The Tamil language is perhaps the only living contemporary of Sanscrit, Pali, Greek, Latin, Hebrew and other 'dead' languages that flourished more than two thousand years ago. Tamil undoubtedly possesses the oldest and the richest literature among the many languages current in India today.

Puranic Version of the Origin of Tamil Literature

The history of Tamil literature must therefore be long and interesting. In fact its beginning, like the origin of the Tamil race, is lost in the early mists of tradition. In later days, the attempt to standardise the traditions of all Hindus resulted in the rise of Puranic stories in the South more or less in keeping with those current in the North; these stories have caused much mischief, by obliterating the important land-marks of history and giving even ordinary events a mythological aspect, hardly acceptable to the modern historian. Thus for instance, the Puranic version of the origin of Tamil literature tells us that once upon a time Brahma the Supreme God of the Puranic Aryans, came down from the celestial world to bathe in the Ganges, accompanied by Saraswathy the goddess of learning and two other celestial maidens. On their way, unfortunately, Saraswathy became enchanted by the music of a mere mortal and lingered a while to listen. As a result, she reached the river only after Brahma had finished his bath. Brahma thereupon cursed Saraswathy declaring that out of the fifty two letters that formed her body, forty nine would be born as great poets. In the fulness of time Brahma's curse was fulfilled, and the forty nine letters now born as poets, wandered all over India, and finally met together at Madura the Pandyan capital, where they inaugurated a 'sangam.' The head of this sangam was a poet named Nakkirar.

Poet Nakkirar and the Three Sangams

This poet Nakkirar is of course a historical person and many of his writings are with us today. He is believed to have lived during the early part of the second century, and was the head of a School of literary critics, which later came to be known as the Last Sangam. The venue of this Sangam was Madura, and it was organised under the patronage of the Pandyan monarchs. Nakkirar who is known as one of the sternest critics of his times says in his commentary on "Ahapporul" that it was the belief among the Tamils of his day that many thousands of years ago, King Kaysina-Valudi of Pandya inaugurated a society or sangam for the furtherance of Tamil learning. This society existed at South Madura, the then Pandyan capital, for a period of 4400 years. It was patronised by 89 kings of Pandya, the last of whom bore the name of Kadungon. A formidable array of poets—4449 of them including 7 kings—is said to have contributed their works to this sangam. Among them we find the names of a few gods of the Hindu Pantheon, who after all might have been mere mortals once upon a time!

Among the works mentioned as having been accepted by this school of critics, we notice some on music, dancing and the allied arts. But alas! not one exists today. It is said that in the reign of King Kadungon a great

tidal wave swept across the Pandyan Kingdom, submerging Panai-nadu or the Palmyrah country which formed the southernmost district of Pandya. The city of South Madura and the great library containing the works of the First Sangam perished in this great tidal wave. The identity of Panai-nadu is not altogether obscure. The extreme south of India and the extreme north of Ceylon are essentially "Panai-nadus" even today and, in the remote past, might have formed a continuous stretch of low-lying sandy country. Marine-geologists are actually of opinion that an inrush of the sea had at some pre-historic time separated India and Ceylon, and if the tradition of the Tamils—the very people who inhabited this submerged country and who alone could have witnessed this event—can be given any credence, this must have happened about B.C. 5400.

The Middle Sangam

Soon after the submersion of South Pandya, Vanther Seliyan, a Pandyan king, made Kapatapuram the capital of his kingdom and continued the good work of his ancestors by re-establishing the literary sangam. This is now known as the Middle Sangam.

Kapatapuram is mentioned in the Ramayana as one of the likely places where Ravana might have taken Sita. It is described as a celestial city rich in gold and adorned with pearls. Nakkirar says that according to the belief of his time, Kapatapuram remained the seat of Tamil culture and learning for 3700 years. Tamil literature flourished here under the patronage of 59 kings and 3700 poets are said to have contributed to this sangam. None of the works reputed to have been produced by this sangam exists today, except perhaps the work of a solitary grammarian. This is the Tolkappiyam. Its author Tolkappiyanar is popularly believed to have been a disciple or Rishi Agastiya ; at any rate his work Tolkappiyam is based on the Agastiyam, reputed to be the first grammar of the Tamil language. So much of myth has grown around these two names that it is impossible to determine the real age in which they lived.

To resume the story as recorded by Nakkirar, it is said that further inroads of the sea forced the Pandyans to abandon the city of Kapatapuram, in favour of modern Madura. This happened during the reign of King Mudattiru-Maran, who re-established the sangam in his new capital.

The Last Sangam

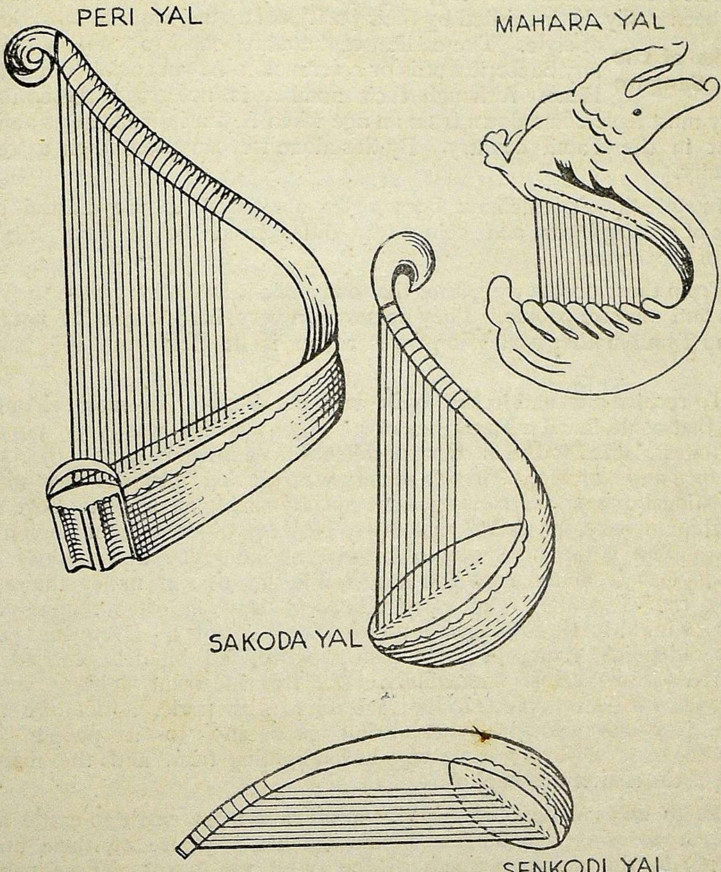
This society now known as the Last Sangam, had existed 1800 years, from the time of Mudattiru-Maran, the founder to King Ugrapperu-valudi during whose reign Nakkirar himself appears to have lived. Therefore it must have been founded about B.C. 1700. Four hundred and forty nine poets are mentioned as contributors to the Last Sangam, and it is a matter of pride to all Tamils that at least Nakkirar's account of the Last Sangam is no myth. The extant works of the Last Sangam actually contain the writings of all the four hundred and forty nine poets, though some are only in parts.

Historicity of the Three Sangams

The story of the three sangams has been subject to much criticism, and many have absolutely discredited the whole story as mere myth. Nevertheless this is not the type of myth that could have taken shape out of nothing. Considering the age of Agastiyar as can be determined from Aryan sources, and the fact that he was a grammarian, it must be admitted that a considerable amount of Tamil literature must have existed before his time to enable him to produce a grammar. The story of the Three

Sangams need not therefore be discredited because of the mythological aspect in which details appear. This is only natural considering the extreme antiquity of the incidents around which tradition has grown.

Today the literature of the Last Sangam not only contains the works of the accredited four hundred and forty-nine poets but also of many more who perhaps lived after Nakkirar. This sangam as an active body is believed to have functioned till about the end of the third century. It lingered in name at least many centuries more. Till about the twelfth century temporary schools were got up in the name of the long defunct Last Sangam, to pass works of outstanding merit, into the rich store-house of Tamil literature.



Harps in use among the Tamils during the Sangam age.

CHAPTER VI

Works of the Last Sangam

The works of the Last Sangam proper are in a class by themselves and have been easily distinguished by their purity of language and independence of style. The earliest of them are found to contain hardly any Sanscrit words or reference to Aryan social or religious ideas. Although their number is not great, these bits of poetry must have come down from an age when Aryan influence was almost absent in the Tamil country. By this alone we can guess their extreme antiquity.

In style these poems have been aptly compared to the natural outbursts of singing birds, and completely differ from the artificial literary style of the Aryans.

From these poems we gather that our ancient forefathers were a very brave and war-like people. They possessed a very high sense of honour, and no Tamil mother would forgive her son if he fled from the battlefield.

To receive a wound in the back was considered the most shameful thing that could befall a Tamil warrior. Hero-worship was very popular and stones planted to the memory of fallen heroes often became objects of reverence and worship. Though society was divided into the five major occupational groups, there was perfect equality among all people. Love and courtship usually preceded marriage; customs differed from region to region. The government was a benevolent monarchy and besides the standing army, soldiers were also recruited in time of war under the well-known feudal system. The three Kings of Dravida often fought each other for imperial rights over the entire Tamil country. Even the petty tribal chieftains, living in their own well-fortified citadels carried on punitive warfare almost unceasingly. But this incessant fighting within the country does not appear to have interfered with trade, agriculture and other peaceful activities that bring prosperity to a people. On the other hand, the army was always in full fighting trim, and the martial spirit of the nation was kept alive.

Poets and "Panars" (minstrels) wandered from castle to castle and kingdom to kingdom, singing heroic ballads in praise of their noble patrons, to the accompaniment of the sweet yal (harp). These panars contributed not a little to the great success of the three sangams. Many of their ballads have come down to us, and they give us real and beautiful pictures of the life led by the Tamil nobility of that martial age.

The poems of the Last Sangam were collected together into several anthologies, under the royal command of Tamil kings such as Ugrapperuvaludi, Ceral Irumporai and Maran-valudi, who lived during the latter part of the Last Sangam. These anthologies have been arranged mostly according to the theme, the most popular being "aham" and "puram" that is, Love and War. The earliest of the love poems are known as "aha-nanuru" or the Four Hundred Love Songs. This contains the works of several poets, and was compiled by the order of King Ugrapperuvaludi. The earliest war poems are likewise known as the "pura-nanuru" or the "Four Hundred War Songs."

These contain the works of 150 poets. As wars are usually fought by kings, the "pura-nanuru" collection gives us interesting accounts of the war-like activities of some of the "crowned kings" of the three Tamil kingdoms, who lived during the period of the Last Sangam.

"Narrinai" (நற்றிணை) another collection of 400 poems, by 175 poets was made by the order of King Maran-valudi. The subject matter of these poems is love.

"Kuruntogai" (குறுந்தொகை) consists of 401 songs by 205 poets and also deals with love.

"Ainguru-nuru" consists of 500 songs by 5 poets and it was compiled by the order of Ceral Irumporai, King of Chera.

"Padirrup-pattu" (பதிற்றுப்பத்து) consists of ten songs of which only eight, by eight separate poets, are now extant. They deal with the war-like activities of the Chera Dynasty.

"Pari-padal" (பரிபாடல்) consists of seventy songs.

"Kalittogai" (கலித்தொகை), a long love poem was composed by a poet named Nallanduvanar.

There are ten other works, known collectively as "Pattuppattu," and they are:—

"Tiru-murugarruppadai" (திருமுருகாற்றுப்படை) by the poet Nakkirar in praise of Murugan, the War-god of the Tamils.

"Porunararruppadai" (பொருநராற்றுப்படை) by the poet Mudattamak-kanni-yar, describes the heroic deeds of Karikalan, King of Chola.

"Siruppanarruppadai" (சிறுபாணாற்றுப்படை) by Nallur Naththanar, in praise of a chieftain named Nalliakkodan.

"Perumpanarruppadai" by Uruthran Kannanar, in praise of Tondaiman Illanthiraian, ruler of Tondai.

"Mullaippattu" by Namputhanar, describing the glories of Kaverippatti-nam, the capital of Chola.

"Mathurai-kanchi" by Mankudi Maruthanar, in praise of Nedun-jeliyan, King of Pandya.

"Nedunalvadai" by Nakkirar in praise of King Nedun-jeliyan.

"Kurinjippattu" (குறிஞ்சிப்பாட்டு) by Kapilar, for the express purpose of acquainting an Aryan king with the sweetness of Tamil poetry.

"Pattinappalai" (பட்டினப்பாலை) by Uruthiran Kannanar in praise of King Karikalan and the city of Kaverippattinam.

"Malaipadukadam" (மலைபடுகடாம்) by Perunkundur Perunkausikanar, in praise of a chieftain named Nannam.

In addition to these eight anthologies, and ten long poems, there are eighteen other poetical works which betray the increasing use of Sanscrit words and ideas borrowed from Brahminical Hinduism. They are therefore believed to have been produced during the latter part of the Last Sangam, when Aryan culture had more or less influenced the Tamil people.

They are :

"Naladiyar, Nanmanikadikai, Kar-narppathu, Kalavalinarppathu, Ina-narppathu, Iniavai-narppathu, Ainthinai-aimpathu, Thinaimalai, Thinaimoli,

Ainthinai-elupathu, Tirukkural, Tirikadukam, Asarakkovai, Palamoli Sirupanjamulam, Muthumolikkanchi, Ealathi and Kainnilai.

Of these the best known is the Tirukkural. This famous masterpiece consists of 1,330 couplets of concentrated wisdom, and deals with almost all subjects that interest mankind. It has been called the Tamil Veda, but unlike the Vedas of the Aryans, the 'Kural' steers clear of dogmatic religion and deals with each subject from a purely ethical point of view. Its author, the great sage Thiruvalluvar, was one of those ancient Tamils for whom dogmatic religion had no meaning, and it is believed that he was a Jain, perhaps the most puritan of the religious sects. His life-story is yet a matter of controversy. Except references to stray incidents in their lives, none of our ancient poets tells us anything about themselves. The stories that originated in later days have no historical foundation and should not therefore be taken seriously.

The 'Kural' has been translated into many European languages, including Latin.

Two of the five Great Epics, Silapathikaram and Manimekalai, also belong to the Last Sangam and were perhaps the last great works to be accepted by the Sangam. The epic style of literature is believed to have been of Aryan origin and it indicates that about the latter part of the Sangam Age, possibly about the middle of the second century or even later, Tamil poets began to stray away from purely Tamil styles, and started to follow or copy the literary traditions of the Aryans.

Silapathikaram, or the Epic of the Anklet, is woven round the life and miraculous deeds of a chaste lady named Kannakai. After her death she came to be worshipped as Pattini or the Goddess of Chastity. At one time her worship had spread into many parts of India including Ceylon. In Ceylon, Tamils still worship Kannakai Ammen, and temples dedicated to her are now more numerous in the Tamil provinces of Ceylon than in South India. According to Sinhalese tradition, the worship of Pattini was introduced into Ceylon by Gajabahu I (A.D. 174-195) who is reputed to have brought to Ceylon an anklet or 'silambu' of Pattini. Pattini devales are found in many parts of the Sinhalese country, and the 'halamba' (Silambu) is still an object of reverence in all Pattini devales.

The incidents related in the epic are believed to have taken place during the reign of a well-known Chera king named Senguttavan, and the author of the epic was none other than a Prince of Chera and a younger brother of Senguttavan, who later came to be known as Illango Adigal. Senguttavan was one of the greatest Tamil kings of ancient times and Illango has taken the opportunity to include a short account of his brother's achievements within the pages of his immortal work.

Manimekalai was written by a grain merchant of Madura named Sitalai Sattanar who was a close and intimate friend of Illango Adigal. He was a Buddhist and though his work centres round the conversion of Manimekalai to the Buddhist faith, he gives us a learned exposition of Buddhist philosophy.

These two works give us a mine of information about the civilization of the ancient Tamils and the arts and crafts that flourished in the Tamil country nearly two thousand years ago. Dancing and music find a very

prominent place in ancient Tamil society. The technique of these arts differed considerably from the Carnatic Music and Bharata-Natyam current in South India today. Astounding details are given regarding the various musical instruments that were in use in those times and the careful training given to a dancing girl. For instance we are told that a dancer had to undergo physical as well as vocal training from her fifth to her twelfth year, and when considered proficient, often gave the first public performance under the patronage of the Royal family. This shows the great interest taken by the Tamil kings of old in matters of culture.

A wide range of musical instruments of purely Dravidian origin are also mentioned. Among them we find four kinds of yals (harps) and thirty-one kinds of drums. It is also interesting to note that Tamil technical words covering the whole field of music, dancing and philosophy were then in use, although today they have all been replaced by words of Sanscrit origin, on the plea of enriching the language.

History of the Tamil Script

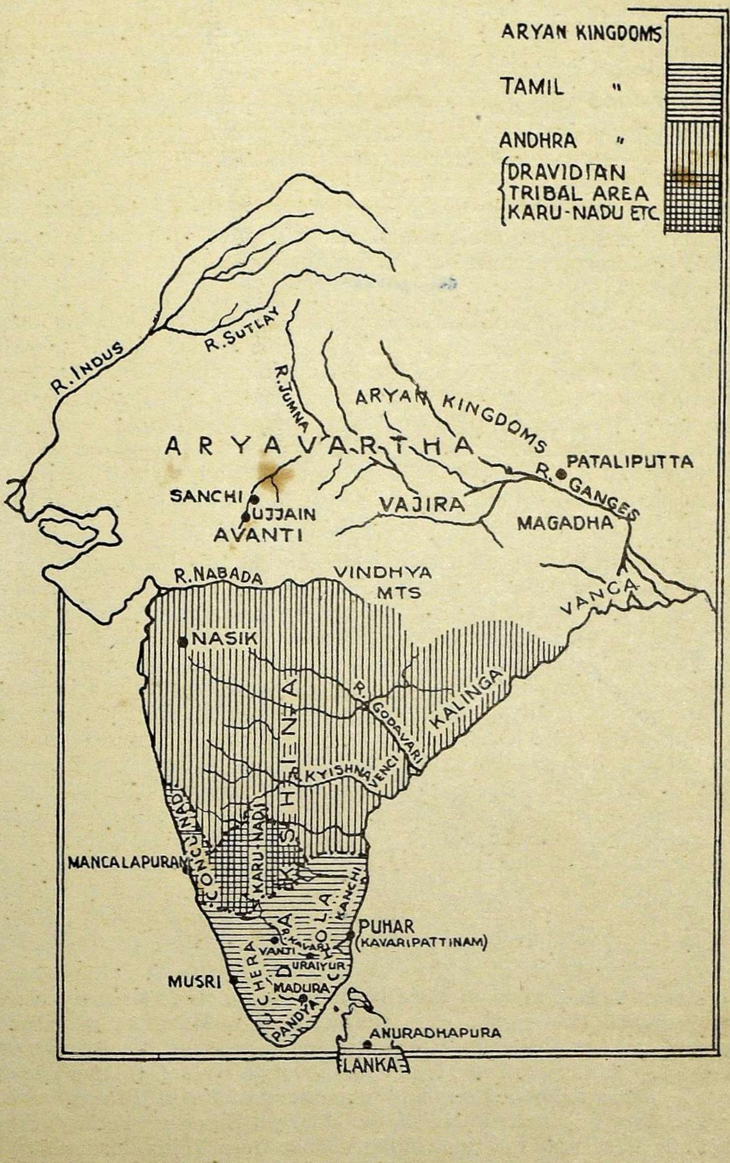
The existence of Tolkappiam and other Sangam literature brings up the question whether there existed an independent system of writing among the ancient Tamils. It is definitely known that Tamil literature from the very beginning was written and not oral like the Vedas and other Sanscrit literature. Tolkappiam itself, while depending on the literature of an earlier period, devotes an entire chapter to "eluttu" or letters, which is itself a pure Tamil word. At the same time it is interesting to note that the earliest Sanscrit grammarian makes no mention of writing perhaps for the very good reason that no script existed among the early Aryans.

It is well-known now that the pre-historic Dravidians possessed a system of writing as early as B.C. 5,000. Prof. Langdon has shown very convincingly how the so-called Brahmi script developed from the pictograph alphabet of the Mohan-jo-Daro period. He further thinks that the Aryans adopted this for their own use, thus enriching their language and at the same time developing features not found in other branches of the Aryan family of languages (Mookerji's Hindu Civilization). The modern Tamil script was adopted about the tenth century and it was developed from an earlier form known as 'Vatteluttu.' This is similar to the Grantha script in which Sanscrit came to be written in South India. Besides 'Vatteluttu' and Grantha there existed in India, especially in the south, various other forms of writing but more or less with a common origin. All these scripts are found to have some connection with the Brahmi script used by the Emperor Asoka in the third century before Christ. Apart from the prehistoric finds at Mohan-jo-Daro, the rock edicts of the Mauryan Emperors are the earliest historical records discovered in India. Hence many think that scripts used in South India were all derived from the Brahmi or Asokan script. Asoka and the other Mauryan Emperors may have been the first to think of preserving history in stone. Possibly they copied the art from the Greeks who ruled over part of North India during this period; but to assume that writing was unknown in India before their time is far from correct. In fact it is now found that the Brahmi script resembles very closely the Phoenician script of the 7th century before Christ. Hence it is also believed that the earliest Indian script is of Semitic origin, without considering the possibility of pre-historic Dravidian India having had a common language and culture with the contemporary nations that dwelt in the Mediterranean region.

Even if the Phoenician origin of the Brahmi script is to be accepted, it is well to remember that these sea-faring people from the Mediterranean coast came to India by sea and not by land. Therefore their connection with South India, the Dravidian country, must have been very much earlier than with the North. Tamil words, chiefly names of merchandise, have found their way into ancient Hebrew and Greek. South Indian timber and other articles have also been discovered in the pre-historic ruins of Mugheir, thus eloquently testifying to the commercial activity that existed between Dravidian India and the early Mediterranean nations. Considering these facts, there is ample room to believe that, if at all this happened, the ancient Phoenician script, first introduced into South India, found its way to the north in course of time; and possibly during the reign of Asoka various forms of it existed both in Aryavartha and Dakshina.

INDIA DURING THE LAST SANGAM

(Up to A.D. 300)



CHAPTER VII

Tamil Kings of the Sangam Period

The Sangam literature introduces us to numerous kings and chiefs of the Tamil country, and tells us a great deal about their literary as well as warlike activities, but unfortunately these references are limited to particular incidents unconnected and insufficient to recast the history of this period as a continuous narrative. The old enmity against the Aryans was quite alive in the hearts of the Tamils of the Sangam period, and there are numerous references in Sangam literature which indicate the political as well as cultural rivalry that still existed between the two races. Tamil kings often made it a point to wage war against one or other of the Aryan nations of the north on the slightest pretext and adopted titles such as 'Arya-padaikadanda' and 'Imayavarmban' Gangai Kondam which no doubt refer to their exploits in Aryavartha.

Ever since the time of Bindusara, when the Mauryan Empire touched the borders of the Tamil country, the kings of Dravida must have realised that the age-long struggle had reached their own frontier. From this time onwards till about A.D. 335, the Tamils were forced to fight the Aryan nations mostly in self-defence, but whenever the opportunity arose, even carried the fight far into Aryavartha. Asoka's successors were not capable monarchs, and by about B.C. 100 the Mauryas had lost all their possessions in Peninsular India. The next Aryan Dynasty to rise to imperial fame was the Guptas, nearly five centuries later—about A.D. 300.

The political history of North India during this long period of 400 years is a tale of woe. About B.C. 100 the Indo-Greeks, descendants of Alexander's followers, who held sway over Bactria and Parthia (modern Afghanistan and Baluchistan) invaded North India and established their rule over Western Aryavartha. This lasted almost up to the beginning of the Christian era. In the south the Andhras, who were one of the first to regain their independence after Asoka's death, recaptured all the country south of the Vindhyas which once formed part of the Mauryan Empire. They even went further and by about B.C. 100 had annexed the Aryan kingdom of Avanti. The Andhras during this period were largely Buddhists and they built many vihares and monasteries, and decorated them with exquisite paintings and sculptures that can be seen to this day at Nasik Ajanta, Ameravati and various other places in the Deccan. The cultural influence of the Andhras was felt even in Ceylon where Buddhist monuments such as dagobas and vihares are found to have been built, fashioned after the Andhra style of architecture. As two Buddhist countries, no doubt, Ceylon and Andhra-desa were in close touch with each other.

About the beginning of the Christian era the Indo-Greeks who ruled over Western Aryavartha were defeated by a Mongol race called the Kushans, and the greater part of North India came under the sway of the Kushan Kings. Kushan rule lasted for about 300 years, till the rise of the Guptas. Thus it can be seen that the greater part of North India was under foreign rule ever since the fall of the Mauryan Empire. Perhaps the only kingdoms that boasted of some independence were Vajira, Magadha, Vanga and the territory between the Ganges and the Himalayas which according

to the Silapathikaram was divided into ten petty states. It is interesting to note that the Tamil kings of this period claim to have fought against the kingdoms of Eastern Aryavartha and not against Western Aryavartha which was under foreign rule practically throughout this period.

Among the better known kings of the Sangam period are Karikalan, perhaps the first to invade North India, Perumceral-Adan, king of Chera and a great warrior who met his defeat at the hands of Karikalan, Aryapadaikadanda Nedunjeliyan, king of Pandya and his contemporary Imayavarmban Nedun-Ceraltan, Cheran Senguttavan, Killivalavan of Chola, a brother-in-law of Senguttavan, Cholan Nalankilli, Nedunjeliyan victor of Talaiyalanganam, Perunar-Killi, Pandyan Maranvaludi, Ugrapperuvaludi and Ceral Irumporai.

Of these except Karikalan and Senguttavan the rest earned their right to fame either in wars conducted within the borders of the Tamil country or in the patronage they accorded to the Sangams. Aryapadaikadanda Nedunjeliyan and Imayavarmban Nedun-Ceraltan, as their titles denote, claim to have won some success against the Aryans, but unfortunately no further information is available on the subject.

King Karikalan of Chola

The earliest and the best-known of the warrior kings of Dravida is Karikalan, King of Chola. It is written that Karikalan was the son of Ellanjet-Senni who was, as his name suggests, a younger brother of the king of Chola. He inherited the throne of Chola while yet in his mother's womb. This shows that both his father and his uncle, the king, died before Karikalan was born. During his minority the kingdom was administered by certain chieftains who had however no intention of restoring the Crown to the rightful heir. It is described that Karikalan was brought up like a lion cub in a cage, with guards and spies all around him. There are many legends connected with his boyhood days. It is said that as a lad he was thrown into prison and kept there for many years. Eventually he escaped from his prison and fled to Chera where his maternal uncle Irumbada Thaliyar was living. Legends state that the people of Chola getting tired of the usurpers rebelled against their rule, and drove them out of the country, and restored the crown to young Karikalan.

When Karikalan became king of Chola, he set himself the task of bringing together the various tribes who under their own chiefs carried on a useless type of internal warfare. He forced the turbulent Oliyar and Aruvalar to submission. The bringing of unity within the kingdom now gave him sufficient strength to proceed against the sister kingdoms of Chera and Pandya. It is believed that the kings of these neighbouring kingdoms helped the usurpers during the days of Karikalan's boyhood. The combined armies of Pandya and Chera however took the offensive and advanced into Chola as far as Venni, the potters' field. Here they came to a clash with the Cholas led by Karikalan in person. It is mentioned that Perum-Ceral, the Chera King who was considered the most famous warrior of the day, wished to meet young Karikalan in single combat, and having recognised him at a distance rushed forward to meet him. Karikalan seeing the famous Cheran advancing towards him shot his arrows at the advancing figure of his enemy. It is said that as he rushed forward towards Karikalan, Perum-Ceral glanced behind to see whether his men followed, and in that fraction of a second, an arrow from the bow

of his enemy struck him on the back of his shoulder. The wound was so slight that Perum-Ceral did not even feel it at that moment. The fight that day was indecisive and at dusk the opposing armies retired to their respective camps. It was while examining his wounds that night, surrounded by his chiefs, that the King of Chera discovered the slight scratch on his back. Although his chiefs assured him that that was but an accident, the implication of such a wound worried him so much that he refused to give battle the following day, and finally committed suicide rather than bring disgrace to his illustrious forefathers.

The victorious Karikalan brought both Pandya and Chera under his suzerainty, and thus united the Tamils perhaps for the first time in their history. Having thus brought the entire Tamil country under his just and wise rule, Karikalan sought to expand the Empire beyond the traditional limits of Dravida. His enemies on the north were the Andhras. We have seen how the Andhras became the most powerful people in India, after the death of Asoka. Although their power lasted till about the beginning of the third century, they had many 'ups' and 'downs' during this period. The rise of the Cholas under Karikalan put the Andhras into the shade for a time.

During the time of Karikalan, the Andhra country appears to have been divided into several kingdoms. Nine of these united together to oppose the Tamil invaders. At Vahai, a great battle was fought which lasted seven days. It ended in a crushing defeat for the Andhras. The defeat of the Andhras gave Karikalan a free passage into Aryavartha. There is room to believe that the Andhras who were of the same racial stock as the Tamils became allies of Karikalan, when the latter invaded the Aryan kingdoms of Vachira (Vajira), Magadha and Avanti. Poets and writers who were contemporaries of Karikalan, beyond mentioning his conquest of the 'northerners', give us no further information on the subject; or perhaps their writings are now lost. However, later writers, during whose time perhaps other records existed, tell us that the victorious Tamil army crossed the Ganges and reached the eastern base of the Himalayas which barred their way more effectively than any Aryan army. The Tamils, born and bred in the sunny south, unable to stand the cold of the Himalayan region decided to turn back, and it is mentioned that Karikalan caused his Tiger Crest to be carved upon a crag, as a witness to his unrivalled feat. There is however no evidence to show that Karikalan brought the conquered kingdoms of the north under his direct rule. It is mentioned that Vajira, Magadha and Avanti presented Karikalan with an enormous quantity of gold and other valuables. The Andhra country was however treated differently. Karikalan appointed members of his family as sub-kings and chieftains in many parts of the Deccan. In later years, the descendants of these Tamil princes called themselves Telugu-Cholas, and even as late as the fourteenth century, Andhra chieftains, as far north as the Bastar state, proudly claimed descent from Karikalan (E.I. 11, page 338). Karikalan shifted his capital from Uraiyur to Kaverippattinam, a well-known port at the mouth of the Kaveri river. From 'Pattinappalai' and other poems we gather that this new capital of Chola was a magnificent city spreading several miles along the bank of the Kaveri. It possessed many large and beautiful buildings. Foreign ships came sailing right up to the jetty and discharged their cargoes on the roadside, where they lay in

great heaps waiting to be stamped with the Tiger Seal of the Cholas. Karikalan, realising the importance of foreign trade, encouraged Greeks, Romans and others to visit his kingdom, and put up warehouses for their convenience. It is described that the streets of Kaverippattinam were full of foreigners, no doubt merchants from many far-off lands.

Agriculture, the mainstay of the Chola Tamils, was by no means neglected. It is claimed that Karikalan built an embankment along the Kaveri for a distance of one hundred miles.

After the death of Karikalan the Cholas appear to have lost their hold on the subject nations. Both Pandya and Chera became independent again. Nedunjeliyan, king of Pandya, and Nedun-Ceraltan, king of Chera, who perhaps lived after Karikalan, claim to have invaded North India. Possibly they came to a clash with the Aryans in an attempt to arrest the disintegration of the Tamil Empire built by the Great Karikalan. Unfortunately we know nothing more about their great venture. Nedun-Ceraltan was succeeded by his son, Senguttavan.

Nedunjeliyan and Nedun-Ceraltan

At this time a civil war was going on in Chola between Senguttavan's brother-in-law Killivalavan and nine other Chola princes. Senguttavan took sides with Killivalavan, defeated the nine Chola princes, and established peace and order in Chola. Later he forced Pandya too to acknowledge his suzerainty, and thus once again the Tamils found themselves united under a strong ruler.

Cheran Senguttavan

Senguttavan's younger brother, Illango Adigal, in his great work 'Silapathikaram' tells us that the king of Chera decided to build and dedicate a temple to Kannakai, the story of whose chaste life was already well-known all over the Tamil land. Orders were about to be given to the sculptors to carve an image of Kannakai out of granite from the Podyil hill sacred to the Tamils, when there came to the Chera court a Brahman, who had just returned from Aryavartha. This Brahman related to the king how at a banquet, certain Aryan kings who held sway over the territory lying to the north of the Ganges had spoken disparagingly of the Tamils, boasting that during the time of the Tamil invasions there were no heroes like themselves in Aryavartha.

When Senguttavan heard this, he decided to get the statue of Kannakai carved out of granite from the Himalayas, and to give it a bath of purification in the Ganges itself.

This was no doubt a challenge to the Aryans, and it was only an excuse to invade the north. On an auspicious day, at the head of a mighty army which included ten thousand cavalry, five hundred elephants and a hundred chariots, Senguttavan started out on his march to Aryavartha. He made his first halt at the Nilgris where he received tributes and fresh contingents from many vassal states. The Karunaders (Kannadas), the Oviars and the warriors of Kudagu-nadu are especially mentioned as having offered valuable help. It would be remembered that many of the ruling Andhra kings and chieftains of this period were descendants of those appointed by Karikalan. Possibly they still acknowledged the suzerainty of the Tamil kings or perhaps they were friendly towards Senguttavan. It is quite obvious that Senguttavan's sphere of influence extended even as far as the Ganges, for mention is made of the Nurruvar Kannar, believed to be

chiefs of Malva, who journeyed all the way to the Nilgris to see Senguttavan personally and dissuade him from his warlike intentions. They even offered to bring a piece of granite from the Himalayas if that would satisfy the king. But in the words of Silapathikaram, the king replied :

"Balakumara's sons, Kanaka and Vijaya and other Northern kings with unrestrained tongues, on the occasion of a Royal banquet, spoke disparagingly and in ignorance of the valour of the Tamil kings. Therefore with exceeding wrath, even like the God of Death, this army marches forth."

Having thus made known his firm resolution to his allies, the Nurruvar Kannar, he ordered his general, Villavan Kodai, to resume the march. Senguttavan's quarrel was with the Aryans who lived north of the Ganges, and he appears to have left the kingdoms of Eastern Aryavartha severely alone. When the mighty army after many months of marching reached the southern bank of the Ganges, they found the Nurruvar Kannar already there with a fleet of boats to ferry the army across the river. The kingdoms north of the Ganges were ruled by Sittara, Vicitra, Rudra, Bhairava, Citra, Sinha, Danurdhara, Siveta, Kanaka and Vijaya. The last two were the chief enemies of Senguttavan. The Aryans attacked the invading Tamil army on the northern bank of the Ganges. The battle was fierce and long, but at the end the Aryans fled in disorder. It is described that the Aryan kings tried to escape disguised as women, priests, minstrels and such non-combatants, but were recognized and taken as prisoners of war. The victorious Senguttavan, having thus vindicated the honour of his race, stayed in the conquered country for some time. During this period he caused the statue of Kannakai to be carved. The purification ceremony was also held, and laden with much spoils of war and accompanied by the captive kings, the Tamil army returned home after an absence of three years. The celebration of Senguttavan's triumphant return, as described in the Silapathikaram, reminds one of the gorgeous scenes enacted in Rome on similar occasions. But unlike the Romans, the Tamils refrained from slaughtering captives. On the contrary all the captive kings, except Kanaka and Vijaya, were allowed to return to their respective kingdoms on their acknowledging Senguttavan's suzerainty. Kanaka and Vijaya, dressed in the female attire in which they attempted to escape, were sent round to the capitals of Chola and Pandya, to be laughed at by the entire Tamil world. But Illango Adigal tells us that this was not appreciated by the kings of Chola and Pandya, who thought that captive kings should be accorded better treatment.

Senguttavan next built a temple and installed in it the statue of Kannakai. Many foreign kings were present on the day of dedication and among them, it is interesting to note, one Kaya Vagu (Gaja Bahu), King of sea-girt Lanka. Gaja Bahu I was king of Ceylon from A.D. 174 to A.D. 195 and we have little difficulty in recognizing him as the guest of Senguttavan. According to the tradition of the Sinhalese, it was Gaja Bahu who introduced Pattini worship into the island, possibly as a result of his visit to Chera. The Mahavamsa tells us nothing about this incident probably because the introduction of a foreign and non-Buddhist religious cult could not have been looked upon with favour by the Buddhist clergy who compiled the chronicle. However the Rajavali, compiled several centuries later, relates a very colourful story of how Gaja-Bahu, accompanied by a giant named Nilamaha Yodaya, paid the King of Tanjore a surprise visit,

and demanded the release of twelve thousand Sinhalese held in captivity. On the demand meeting with a refusal, the visitors proceeded to give an exhibition of their personal prowess by marvellous feats of strength. This accompanied by a threat, that thousands of such strong men were waiting eagerly in Lanka to cross over, so unnerved the Tamil King that he not only released the twelve thousand Sinhalese, but even allowed Gaja-Bahu to take with him twice that number of Tamils to Ceylon. The story further adds that Gaja-Bahu also brought to this Island the "Silambu" or anklet of Pattini, the goddess whom the Tamils worshipped. The introduction of Pattini worship might have been deliberately omitted by the compilers of the Mahavamsa, but had the "Silambu" been brought merely as a trophy of victory, as suggested in the Rajavali, it is difficult to understand why this great and bloodless victory—a feat perhaps unrivalled in history—should have been passed over in silence in the great chronicle, the Mahavamsa. Not only is this story clothed in the garb of fiction, but its very tone is so fanciful, and the circumstances so improbable, that its veracity may be rightly questioned. Further the historical inaccuracy referring to the Chola King as the King of Tanjore—a city unheard of before the ninth century—would tend to confirm the suspicion that this tale is of a very late origin. In contrast to this, the casual and friendly reference made in the "Silapathikaram"—a contemporary record—to Kaya-Vagu of sea-girt Lanka, and his presence at the dedication of the first Temple to Pattini, supported by the Sinhalese tradition that Gaja-Bahu brought to Ceylon Pattini's "Silambu," which is really the symbol worshipped even today in all Pattini temples, leaves no doubt as to the identity of this Kaya-Vagu or the nature of his visit to the Tamil country.

It is not known how long Senguttavan's vast empire lasted. Like all ancient empires it might have crumbled soon after the death of its founder It is impossible to follow the course of history during the century that followed. Various kings are mentioned with reference to local conflicts.

Some of them such as Maran Valudi and Ceral Irumporai were patrons of the Last Sangam, which continued to flourish under their care.

Maran Valudi, Ceral Irumporai, Nedunjeliyan
(Victor of Talaiyanganam)

The best known of the Tamil Kings who lived after Senguttavan is undoubtedly Nedunjeliyan of Pandya. His fame rests on his great victory against the contemporary kings of Chola and Chera at the battle of Talaiyanganam. He is therefore better known as The Victor of Talaiyanganam. He also won further success in Kongu-nadu and thus not only exercised imperial rights over the whole of Dravida, but also boasted of an empire beyond the limits of the Tamil country. He was also a poet, and some of his verses are found in the Puram collections.

Perunarkilli of Chola

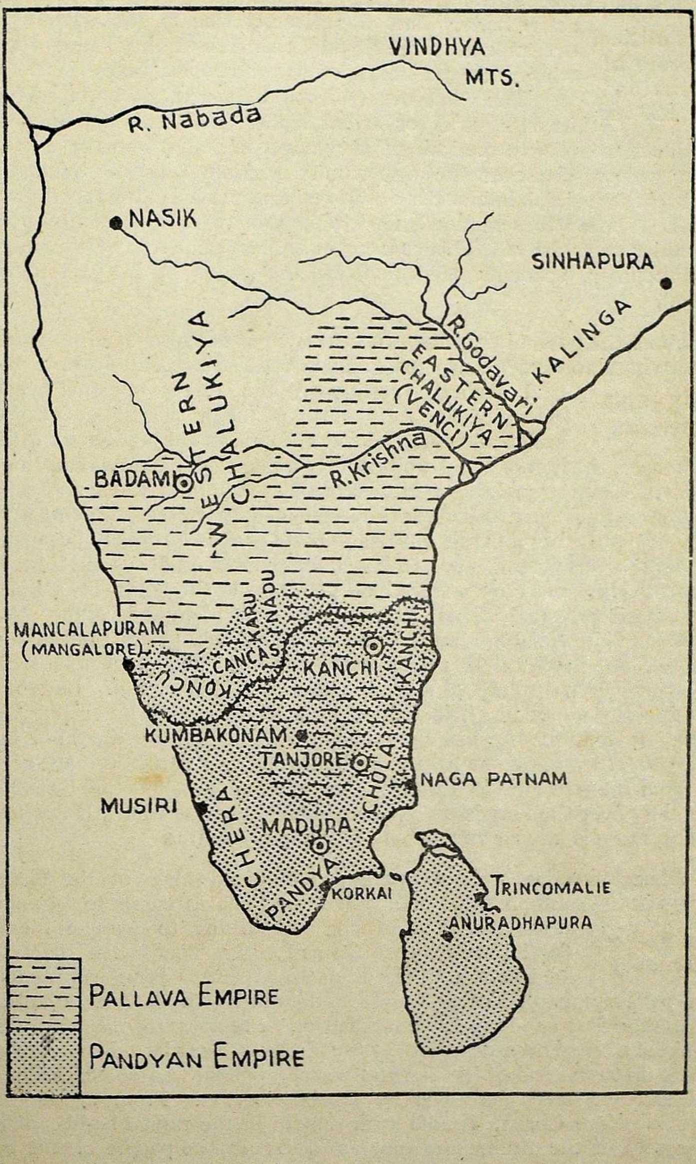
The Chola king, Perunarkilli, who appears to have lived after Nedunjeliyan, claims to have been crowned in the Aryan style, according to Vedic rights. This indicates the growing influence of the Aryan Brahmans in the Tamil country. Before him Karikalan was induced to offer Vedic sacrifices, but there is no evidence to show that Tamil kings before Perunarkilli adopted the Aryan custom of Pattabishekam. Perhaps Perunarkilli was the first to be made a Kshtriya, for according to the Aryan conception, only a Kshtriya was entitled

to this honour. This indeed was a signal triumph for the Brahmans and from this time onwards these advocates of Aryan culture gained for themselves much favour from the kings of Dravida.

This also marks the beginning of a new phase in the history of Dravida—a phase in which Aryan cultural and religious influence was destined to play a great part.

THE PANDYAN & PALLAVA EMPIRES

Between A.D. 600-900.



CHAPTER VIII

From about the beginning of the 4th century the Last Sangam began to decline and by about the 6th century it had ceased to function as an active body. This was directly due to the calamity that overtook the three Royal Dynasties of the Tamil country, whose rule can be traced to pre-historic times.

The Political History of Dravida *(A.D. 300-900)*

The numerous tribes and clans of Dravida had each its own chief or tribal leader, and although they were subordinate to the "crowned kings" they never hesitated to make a bid for greater power whenever the opportunity presented itself. Some tribes, especially those which inhabited the hill-country, proved extremely difficult to control. These tribes acknowledged the authority of the central powers, only under compulsion. This resulted in endless punitive wars within the Tamil country, accounts of which fill the pages of Sangam literature (Puram).

The Kalabhra Dynasty

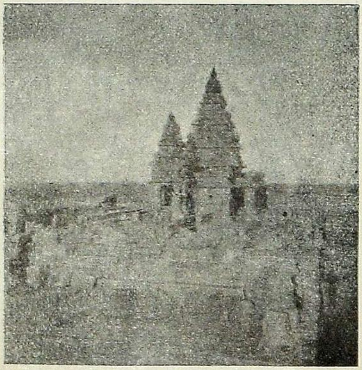
About the beginning of the 4th century one of these semi-independent tribes, whose antecedents are absolutely unknown, suddenly rose to power and having overthrown the three ancient dynasties, occupied the Tamil thrones for a period of nearly two hundred years. Except Tondai-nadu or Kanchi, as it was now known, the rest of the Tamil country came under the sway of this new dynasty. Little or nothing is known of these Kalabhra kings, and it is still a matter of conjecture as to how they managed to upset the entire Tamil land. No poets or minstrels have sung their praises probably because they were no patrons of learning. One solitary reference tells us that the three "crowned kings of Dravida were held prisoners at the court of a Kalabhra king named Acyuta." This Acyuta has been identified as the "Acyuta Vikkanta of the Kalabhra family" mentioned by the great Buddhist commentator Buddhadatta as ruling over the fair land of Chola with the ancient and beautiful city of Kavarippattinam as his capital. Buddhadatta was himself a native of Chola, hailing from Uraiyur, and he visited Ceylon in the 5th century. Acyuta, the only known king of the Kalabhra family, must have therefore come to power about the latter part of the 5th century, and from the reference in Tamil literature, we may assume that he exercised suzerainty over the kingdoms of Chera and Pandya as well. Unfortunately nothing more is known about these war-like Kalabhras.

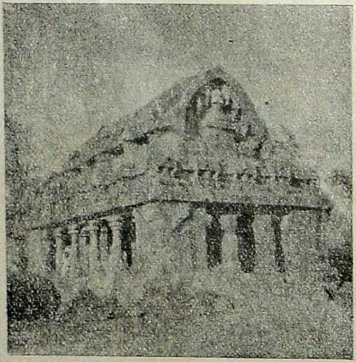
The Pallava Dynasty

Almost simultaneously and perhaps taking advantage of the Kalabhra success in the south, another clan called the Pallavas came to prominence in the district of Kanchi. According to Sangam literature, Tondai-nadu was so named after Tondaiman Illantraiyan, the son of a Chola king by a Naga princess probably of Mani-pallavam, capital of a Naga Kingdom in North Ceylon. Illantraiyan became the first sub-king of this district. Previous to this, this district remained a tribal area occupied by the Tiraiyas, a sea-faring clan of Tamils. Almost up to the end of the Sangam period, Tondai was considered a part of Chola and was ruled over by Chola viceroys. From about the 5th century before Christ, Tondai with Kanchi as the capital had become the stronghold of the Brahmans, and as a result, the people of this region

RUINED CITY OF MAHA-BALIPURAM

A.D. 660





appear to have come early under Aryan influence, and the local chieftains of whom the Pallava clan appears to have been one, had learnt to show great partiality to Sanscrit studies. Perhaps these Pallavas were the descendants of Illantraiyan.

Samudragupta and the Tamils

About A.D. 335 Samudragupta, who is considered the greatest Aryan emperor since Asoka, invaded the south perhaps in retaliation against the Andhras and Tamils who had subjected the Aryans to much humiliation during the previous centuries. He marched right up to the Krishna river, conquering several Andhra kingdoms, but on the banks of the Krishna this Aryan invader was defeated by a confederation of Tamil kings under the leadership of a Pallava king of Kanchi. This shows that by about A.D. 335, the Pallavas had established themselves as independent rulers of Tondai, and their rule already extended up to the river Krishna. The signal success of the Pallavas over such a famous and invincible warrior as Samudragupta raised the kingdom of Kanchi to great prominence, and possibly this was the beginning of the great Pallava Empire. But unfortunately nothing further is known about them, till A.D. 575. About this time a prince named Simha-vishnu ascended the throne of Kanchi. Simha-vishnu was a very war-like king and with the intention of expanding his kingdom southwards, he attacked Chola and vanquished the Kalabhra king who ruled over Chola. He also claims to have defeated the Kalabhra king of Pandya and also the kings of Chera and Ceylon. No information is available on his conflict with Chera and Ceylon, but events that took place in Pandya are known to some extent. In his wars against the Kalabhras, Simha-vishnu was helped by a member of the old Pandyan Dynasty named Kadungon.

Kadungon Restores the Pandyan Dynasty

Kadungon who was perhaps ruling as a petty chief in some corner of Pandya, took advantage of the situation and attacked the Kalabhra king of Pandya, who was already losing against Simha-vishnu. On the fall of the Kalabhras, Kadungon seized Pandya. He was hailed by the Pandyans as the "Restorer of old times" and perhaps he well deserved this title. The Pallavas however felt that they had been robbed of their spoils of war by Kadungon and thus began the enmity between the Pallavas and the Pandyans that lasted for nearly five centuries.

Events in Aryavartha

The Gupta empire which came into existence about the beginning of the 4th century and which restored for a time the ancient glory of the Aryans, was overthrown by the Huns (Hunas) about the latter part of the 5th century and Aryavartha once again passed under foreign rule. The rule of the Huns lasted till about the middle of the 6th century when the Aryan Kingdoms united together and succeeded in driving the Huns to the extreme north. Just as the Huns who invaded Europe under Attila were later absorbed into the German people, even so, these Huns who invaded India, in course of time became one with the Indo-Aryans among whom they were forced to settle down. In A.D. 606 a Buddhist prince named Harsha became king of Thanesar, then the strongest of the Aryan kingdoms. Soon he became emperor of North India and like his ancestors made an attempt to conquer Dakshina.

About the time the empire of the Huns collapsed, a new dynasty called the Chalukiyas rose to power in the western part of the Andhra country. The kings of the Chalukiya Dynasty, whose rule and zone of influence extended from the Vindhyas to the northern boundary of Chera, always identified themselves with the kings of the south. Therefore when Harsha attempted to invade the south, his enterprise was nipped in the bud by Pulakesin II, the Chalukiyan Emperor, who defeated the Aryans on the banks of the Nabada river, and thus rolled back the invasion even before it reached Dakshina. This was the last attempt made by the Aryans to conquer the south.

The Chalukiyas of Western Deccan

The powerful Chalukiyas however did not love the Pallavas of the south whose power was also growing day by day, and this soon led to hostilities between Pulakesin II and Mahendra-varman I, the successor of Simha-vishnu. Kadungon, now king of Pandya, and even the king of Chola who was but a subordinate of the Pallavas, cast their lot with Pulakesin II no doubt with the purpose of checking the Pallavas. This helped the Pandyans to re-organise themselves, and while the Chalukiyas and the Pallavas were at each other's throats, Kadungon strengthened his position by crushing petty rebellions and forcing turbulent tribes into submission. Kadungon's ally, Pulakesin, won a substantial success against Mahendra-varman, and succeeded in capturing the province of Vengi in the east coast, between the Krishna and the Godavari. Vengi-nad was really a part of the Andhra country, but during this period formed part of the Pallava Empire.

Clash between the Chalukiyas and the Pallavas

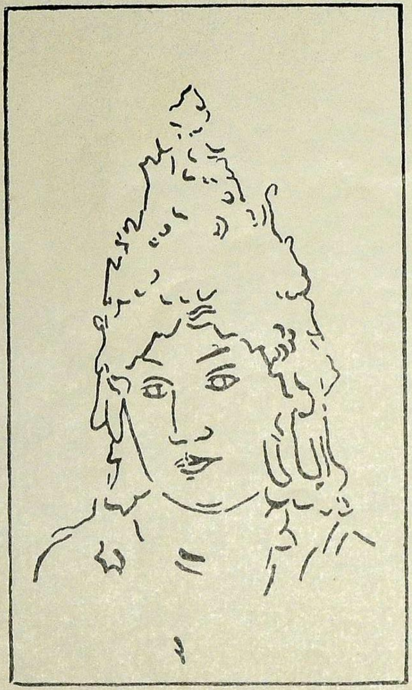
Pulakesin created Vengi into a separate kingdom, and put his own brother as King. In course of time this new kingdom came to be known as Eastern Chalukiya.

Two years later in A.D. 642 however the Chalukiyas met with serious reverses. Narasimha-varman who is considered the greatest of the Pallava kings became King of Kanchi and almost immediately the Pallavas began to recover lost ground. Pulakesin, great as he was, met his defeat at the hands of the young Pallava. The Chalukiyas were completely routed and Narasimha-varman claimed to have pursued them to their very capital Badami, which was sacked without mercy. But at the same time, the Pallavas could not re-capture Vengi, and they had to be satisfied with the new territories captured from the Chalukiyas. The struggle with the Chalukiyas did not end with this, however, and it dragged on with varying success, for several generations.

Narasimha-varman Defeats the Chalukiyas

Narasimha-varman ruled till about A.D. 660. He was the most powerful among the kings of Dravida, and his rule marked the beginning of many new features in Tamil culture. He encouraged the spreading of Aryan culture, and helped the Brahmans in this work. He did not want to keep Dravida separate from the rest of India, and therefore adopted the customs and manners of the Aryans, and liberally endowed the Sanscrit institutions that already existed in Kanchi. It was chiefly during this period that the ancient arts and crafts of the Tamils began to lose their

Narasimha-varman and his Rule



MAHENDRA VARMAN

A DANCING GIRL OF THE SAME PERIOD

characteristic features. "Kuttus" became "natyams" and "in-isai" became "sangeetham" and standard works on such subjects began to be written more and more in Sanscrit. The Pallavas were as a rule lovers of architecture and sculpture just as their rivals, the Cholas and the Pandyans, were lovers of literature. Narasimha-varman for the first time built Hindu temples of granite following no doubt the example of the Buddhists and Jains. In the field of art, Narasimha-varman's greatest achievement was the building of the temple city of Mahabalipuram which now lies half buried in the sands of the east coast. Its granite temples, covered with exquisite carvings depicting scenes from the Hindu scriptures, have been considered the finest examples of Indian sculpture. The cultural influence of the Pallavas was not confined to South India but is found to have spread to such distant countries as the East Indies and Ceylon. The Pallavas were also a great naval power and some believe that they even colonised certain countries on the opposite coast of the Bay of Bengal.

Manavamma, King of Ceylon

About this time a Sinhalese prince named Manavamma, who became king of Ceylon in A.D. 676, was living as a refugee in the court of Kanchi. He took part in the wars against the Chalukiyas and so distinguished himself as a soldier that the king of Kanchi helped him to make a bid for the throne of Ceylon. It is written that the King of Kanchi gave Manavamma an army of well-trained soldiers and also ships to carry them to Ceylon. Manavamma landed in Ceylon and marching on Anuradhapura captured it without much difficulty, but unfortunately when the Tamil army returned to Kanchi, Manavamma was forced to quit Ceylon once again. In A.D. 676 the King of Kanchi once again sent an army to restore Ceylon to Manavamma. This was easily done as the Sinhalese too were without a proper leader, and were glad to accept Manavamma as king. It was about this time that Pallava influence began to be felt in Ceylon, and no doubt Manavamma was responsible for it. The ruins of Anuradhapura show clearly that during this period the Sinhalese craftsmen learnt a good deal from the Pallavas.

Just as Manavamma made use of Tamil arms to regain his kingdom, even so he must have made use of Tamil craftsmen to embellish and beautify his capital.

Pandyan Maravarman Avanisulamani *(A.D. 620-645)*

About A.D. 620 Kadungon was succeeded by his son Maravarman Avanisulamani. He continued his father's good work of organizing the resources of Pandya and ruled over his kingdom for nearly twenty-five years. We have no further information about his rule.

Sendan *(A.D. 645-670)*

About A.D. 645 Sendan, the son of Avanisulamani, ascended the throne of Pandya, and found himself at the head of a fairly well organised kingdom. His thoughts naturally turned to foreign conquests, but unfortunately his war-like activities had to be very limited, owing to the presence of the powerful Pallava king, Narasimha-varman, in the north. Sendan had therefore to be satisfied with punitive warfare against certain Chera chieftains whose territories he annexed.

Arikesari Maravarman, the son of Sendan, was crowned about A.D. 670. Like his father Arikesari possessed war-like qualities and was impatient to expand his kingdom. Narasimha-varman, the great Pallava, was dead. The Pandyans no longer feared the Pallavas and there started a keen competition between the two for supremacy over South India. Arikesari defeated the Pallavas twice, once at Pali, and again at Nelveli. These places have not been identified yet for want of further particulars. There appears to have been some internal disturbances too. The Paravas of the south coast and the people of Kuru-nadu rose in revolt but Arikesari supressed them with a strong arm. Next he started a campaign against his Chera contemporary and after winning a series of battles utterly crushed the Chera power by capturing the king and the Royal household. Thus the reign of Arikesari Maravarman saw the actual expansion of Pandya. Chera became subordinate to Pandya and parts of Chola previously held by the Pallavas also fell into the hands of the Pandyans. What was more important than the acquisition of territories was the fact that the dominant position so long held by the Pallavas was very badly shaken.

Arikesari Maravarman *(A.D. 670-710)*

Koccadayan, alias Ranadhira, the next king, succeeded his father about A.D. 710: He too was a war-like king and maintained his hold on Chera and parts of Chola. At Marudur, he put down a rebellion started by an Ay or Shepherd Chief. Koccadayan later invaded the Kongu country and defeated the Maharattas who were ruling over the west coast, north of Chera, with Mangalapuram (Mangalore) as their capital. The Pandyans captured Mangalapuram and brought the Kongu country under their rule. This new acquisition—the Kongu country—was a source of perpetual trouble to the Pandyans and Koccadayan's successors were forced to reconquer at least parts of it before they could establish their sovereignty over this province.

Koccadayan *(A.D. 710-740)*

Maravarman Rajasimha, son of Koccadayan, set himself the task of crushing the Pallavas, and he won several battles, at Neduvayal, Kurumadai, Mannikurichi, Tirumangai, Puvalur Kodumbalur and other places. The mention of several battles show that Rajasimha's campaign against the Pallavas was long and fierce. Ultimately at Kulumbur he brought the war to a glorious end by gaining a decisive victory against Nandivarman Pallavamalla who, it is described, fled from the battle-field leaving behind numberless elephants, horses and other war material. Udayacandran, the Pallava general, also claims to have defeated the Pandyans on several occasions, but there is no doubt that the end of the long struggle was in favour of Rajasimha.

Maravarman Rajasimha I *(A.D. 740-765)*

After his victory over the Pallavas, Rajasimha crossed the Kaveri into Malakongam, and penetrated far into Karu-nadu which formed part of the zone of influence of the Chalukiyas. The Ganga Dynasty which ruled over a part of Karu-nadu appears to have been subordinate to the Chalukiyas at this time. Rajasimha therefore came into conflict with the Chalukiya power, and at Venbai a great battle was fought. The Pandyans emerged victorious, and the Gangas therefore accepted Pandyan supremacy. As a happy ending to the war against the Gangas, Prince Nedunjadayan, the son and heir of Rajasimha, married a Ganga princess.

Jatila Parantaka Nedun-jadayan alias Varugna succeeded his father about A.D. 765. On the death of Rajasimha, practically all the subject nations rose in revolt, and Nedun-jadayan found himself at war with all his father's former enemies. Even the hill chiefs of the south staged a demonstration against the new king. The war with the Pallavas was opened once again. Nedun-jadayan won an important victory at Punnagadam, on the south bank of the Kaveri but soon afterwards lost his able minister, Marangari. Maran Eyinan, the brother of Marangari, was appointed chief minister.

Parantaka Nedun-jadayan
(A.D. 765-815)

The king of the Western Kongu country helped by the Pallavas and Cheras now rose against the authority of Nedun-jadayan, but their combined army led by Adigan, a Kongu chief, was badly defeated at the battles of Ayirur and Pugaliyur on the north bank of the Kaveri. The defeat of Adigan practically put an end to all rebellions in the Kongu country, and it is said that the King of Kongu was taken prisoner and sent to Madura. In commemoration of this, Nedun-jadayan built a temple at Kanjivayperur in Kongu. Five years later Kanchi too was forced to submit and Nedun-jadayan found himself Emperor not only of the entire Tamil country but also of the extensive territory stretching as far as Mangalore. The chieftains of Venad (South Travancore) and those of the forested hill-country, continued to give trouble and about A.D. 788 a punitive war was started for the purpose of crushing these turbulent tribes once for all. Sadayan Karunandan of Malai-nadu was defeated, and the fortress of Ariviyur-Kottai and Karai-Kottai are said to have been completely destroyed. After the supression of these hill tribes, Nedun-jadayan was able to enjoy the fruits of his labours for about a quarter century without any further wars.

About A.D. 815 Sri Maran Vallahaba succeeded his father as Emperor of Dravida. Again the subject nations rose in rebellion. A rising in Venad had to be suppressed. The Pallavas led by Nandivarman III, defeated the Pandyans at a place called Tellaru and thus not only threw off the Pandyan yoke but even a part of Chola was wrested from the Pandyans. This victory brought to the side of the Pallavas almost all the Northern powers who were watching the expansion of the Pandyan Empire somewhat suspiciously. The Gangas who appear to have extricated themselves from the hands of the Pandyans, the Kalingas, the Chalukiyas and even the Magadhas of North India are said to have ranged themselves on the side of the Pallavas. Sir Maran however proved himself equal to the formidable combination and actually defeated the allied army at Kumbakonam. This victory made the Pandyans supreme in South India and even the Chalukiya and Andhra kingdoms of the Deccan acknowledged the suzerainty of Sri Maran.

Sri Maran Vallahaba
(A.D. 815-862)

Sri Maran now cast his eyes southwards across the narrow bit of sea, on the beautiful island of Lanka. So far except for adventurers from the Tamil country, no Tamil king had seriously thought of Ceylon.

Sri Maran invaded Ceylon with a powerful army and completely routed the Sinhalese at Mahatalita. Sena I, ruler of Ceylon, fled to the hills of Malaya-rata. Prince Mahinda and several other Sinhalese chiefs committed suicide on the battlefield rather than fall into the hands of the Tamils. Another Prince named Kassapa—a warrior of great repute—is also recorded to have lost heart and fled from the battlefield, so complete was the Pandyan victory. Sri Maran however restored the throne to

Sena I on his acknowledging Pandyan suzerainty, and returned to Madura flushed with victory and carrying away much booty. Sinhalese historians say that in the reign of Sena II (A.D. 866-901) the Sinhalese avenged themselves by invading Pandya and placing on the Pandyan throne a king of their own choice. Tamil inscriptions however do not show any break in the Pandyan succession during this period, and if what the Sinhalese say is true, the pretender put on the Pandyan throne by them must have had a very short stay indeed. Sri Maran's glorious reign was however clouded by military reverses towards the end. Nandivarman the king of Kanchi was succeeded by his son Nrpatungavarman, about A.D. 854. He was a youthful king who was determined to win back the fortunes of his House. He waged a bitter war against Sri Maran, giving the latter no chance to rest on his laurels, and finally defeated the Pandyans on the bank of the river Aricit, a branch of the Kaveri. Sri Maran did not long survive this defeat and was succeeded by his son Varuganavarman about A.D. 862.

Nrpatunga-varman, King of Kanchi

The new king of Pandya had to recognise the strong position which the king of Kanchi had won for himself as victor of the battle of Aricit. He therefore lived in peace with his neighbour till about A.D. 880. Nrpatungavarman was dead by this time and his son Aparajita was king of Kanchi. Varuganavarman now thought that he would test his strength, and attacked the Pallavas, but at the battle of Sri Purambian the Pandyans were thoroughly beaten. Aparajita was helped by Prithivipati I, the king of the Western Gangas, who unfortunately lost his life in this battle.

Varuganavarman *(A.D. 862-880)*

Aparajita, King of Kanchi

During the period the Pandyans and the Pallavas were fighting each other for supremacy over the Tamil country, the descendants of the ancient Chola Dynasty were ruling as petty chiefs in remote parts of the country. Some years prior to the defeat of the Pandyans at the battle of Sri Purambian, a prince of the Chola Dynasty named Vijayalayan who claims to be the descendant of Karikalan captured the city of Tanjore from a local chieftain and making this city his headquarters raised the Tiger Standard of the Cholas.

Rise of the Chola Dynasty

Vijayalayan

Varuganavarman king of Pandya died soon after his defeat at the hands of the Pallavas. He was succeeded by his brother Parantankan Viranarayanan who had married a Chera princess named Vanavan Mahadevi. He claims to have fought in the Kongu country and at various places but unfortunately details about his career are not known. The Pandyan power was now definitely on the wane and Viranarayanan must have done his bit to arrest the decline of his kingdom.

Parantankan Viranarayanan *(A.D. 880-900)*

About A.D. 900 Viranarayanan's son Maravarman Rajasimha II was crowned king of Pandya. In his reign things took a definite turn for the worse. The danger did not come from the Pallavas, but from the newly resurrected Chola Dynasty. When Adityan I, son of Vijayalayan ascended the throne of Tanjore, he showed himself a very aggressive monarch. He defeated the Pallava king Aparajita in several battles and won back the ancient kingdom of Chola including the province of Tondai or Kanchi. This

Maravarma Rajasimha II *(A.D. 900-920)*

rapid recovery of the Cholas took the Pandyans by surprise, and soon they found themselves at war, with this new power.

With the rise of the Cholas of the House of Vijalayan we enter a new and glorious phase of Tamil history, best described as the "Golden Age."

CHAPTER IX

We have seen how the Last Sangam ceased to be an active body owing to the misfortune that overtook the Royal Dynasties of Dravida.

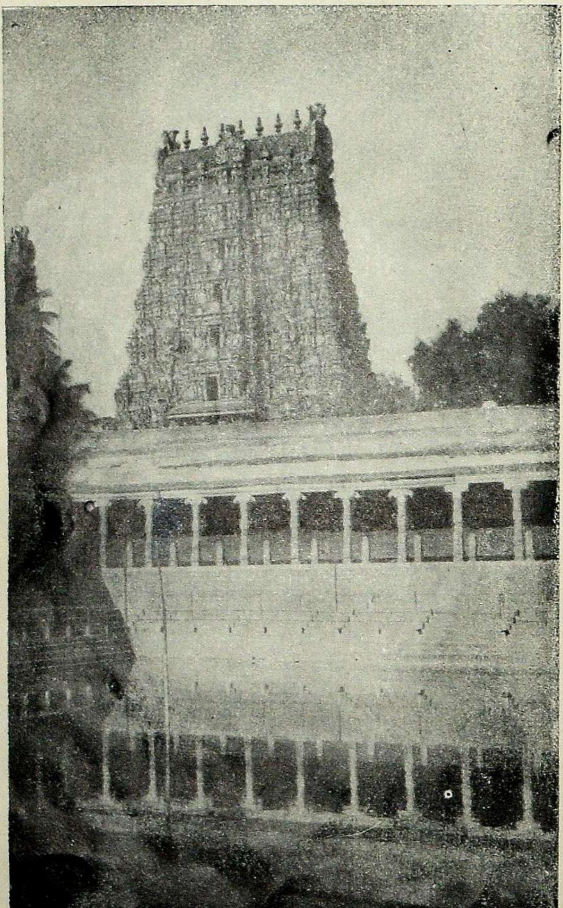
The History of Tamil Literature
(From A.D. 600-900)

Even after the Pandyans returned to power no attempt appears to have been made to revive the Sangam. The loss of Royal patronage was no doubt a great set-back to poets and therefore the old type of minstrel poets completely disappeared and in their place there appeared those whom we may call sages and saints, to whom Royal patronage, though welcome was by no means essential for success. Sangam poets wrote ballads, odes and long descriptive poems. They never touched upon philosophy or dogmatic religion—except perhaps to describe some ancient religious custom that had become part and parcel of Tamil civilization. Even a work like the Kural steers clear of dogmas and doctrines. During the post-Sangam period—from about A.D. 600, Tamil literature entered a new phase in which religion began to play a greater part than it had hitherto done.

It was during the Sangam period that the Tamil country came under the influence of the many religious sects such as Brahmans, Jains and Buddhists.

Brahmanism

Brahmanism possessed an advantage over the others, in that, it arrived centuries earlier, and long before the advent of Jainism and Buddhism, had absorbed much of the local cults of the Tamils; so much so, that the Tamils never felt that they were accepting a foreign cult in Brahmanism. However the Brahmans kept to Sanscrit as their religious language and did not produce anything of a religious nature in Tamil. They depended too much on their ritual and ceremonies and withheld true knowledge from the common people. On the other hand, Jains and Buddhists wrote much in Tamil but always with the idea of propagating their religious doctrines. These works became very popular among the Tamils, so much so, that centuries later Saiva and Vaishnava teachers have bitterly complained that the Tamils were wasting their life reading this "worthless literature of heretical sects." It was little wonder therefore that towards the end of the Sangam period Jainism and Buddhism became very popular in Dravida and even some of the kings began to openly embrace these religions. In spite of the fact that all these religious sects vied with one another, there was great religious tolerence during the Sangam period. From the beginning of the 4th century however a certain amount of rivalry and bitterness becomes evident. The great success of Jainism and Buddhism, not only in the Tamil country but all over India, placed the orthodox Brahmans in a very precarious position. It was at this critical period of Hindu history, that Sankara, the saviour of Brahmanism was born. He belonged to an orthodox Brahman family of Kaladi, a village in Chera. He became a great Achariar or teacher, and gave Brahmanism a new lease of life with his clear exposition of the Vedanta philosophy. Sankara preached and wrote in Sanscrit, and travelled all over India and succeeded in counteracting the activities of heretical sects such as the Buddhists and Jains. He organised the Hindu religion, and perhaps taking an example from the Buddhists and Jains, founded monasteries, one in each of the four provinces into which he



MADURA TEMPLE

divided India. The monastery which he founded in South India, was located at Kanchi, which long remained the principal seat of Sanscrit learning. Owing to Sankara's preachings and writings there rose a wave of enthusiasm in favour of Brahmanism. His interpretation of the Vedas and other religious works, not only counteracted the growing godlessness of the Indian peoples, but also pulled out Brahmanism from its narrow orthodoxy and made it the religion known as Hinduism today. Since the revival of Hinduism started in the Tamil country, there was no doubt a great deal of religious intolerance during this period, and often it ended in the persecution of one sect by the other. Brahmans, Buddhists and Jains vied with one another to gain the favour of the reigning kings. Open debates were common all over the Tamil country, and it is described that logicians flew their own flags in front of their tents challenging others to contest.

The new enthusiasm in favour of Hinduism, resulted in the birth of the "Baktha cult." The Bakthas who were drawn from all classes believed not in abstract philosophies but in real spiritual experience. In such close communion with God alone they found real religion and true salvation. This spiritual state could be attained only by devotion to a particular aspect of God or in other words to a particular Deity. It required not birth or brains, but only a pure heart, and it was within the reach of the most illiterate outcast. These Bakthas came from both the Saiva and Vaishnava sects, and although they did not differ in principle they often showed as much rivalry towards each other as they did towards Jainism and Buddhism. They wrote and sang soul inspiring and beautiful devotional songs in Tamil.

The Bakthas

Among the many Nayanars as the devotees of Siva were known, the most important are four in number—Appar, Sundramurthi, Thirugnanasampanthar and Manicavasagar and their sacred songs or "thevarams" have been collected together into eight books known as the eight "Thiri-molies." Of these the first three contain the songs of Thirugnanasampanthar, fourth to sixth, the songs of Appar, seventh the songs of Sundramurthi, and the eighth the songs of Manicavasagar.

Of the Alvars or Vaishnava Bakthas there are eleven, namely, Peyalvar, Bhutattalvar, Poykaialvar Tirumalisaialvar, Nammalvar Kulasekeralvar, Perialvar, Andal, Tondaradippodialvar, Tiruppanalvar and Tirumangaialvar. The songs written by those saintly men, were collected together about A.D. 920 by a sage named Nathamuni and is now known as the "Nalayera Prabandham" or the Four Thousand Hymns.

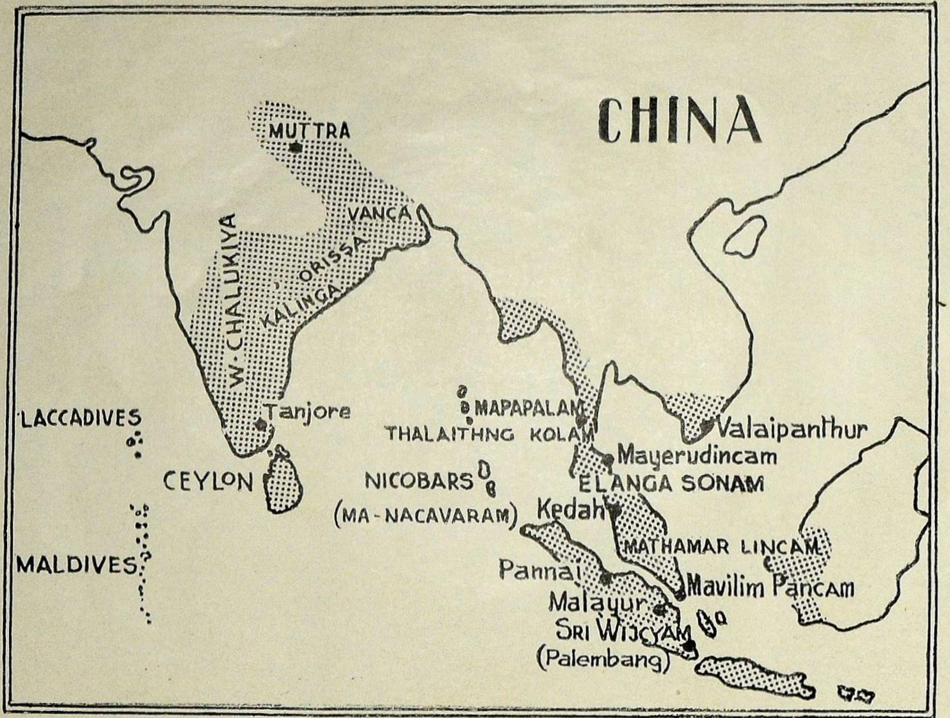
Appar the earliest of the Bakthas, converted the king of Kanchi—Mahendra Varman I, from the Jain faith to Saivism; Thirugnanasampanthar too is said to have converted a Pandyan king and likewise Perialvar is recorded to have converted Sri Maran Vallabha, king of Pandya from Jainism to the Vaishnava faith. All these "conversions" show that Jainism and Buddhism counted some of the greatest intellectual giants of Dravida among their adherents. We shall therefore see to what extent Jain and Buddhist writers have contributed to Tamil literature during this period.

Jain and Buddhist Writers

The epic or Kavya style of poetry was first adopted by the Aryans for the purpose of teaching or propagating Brahmanic doctrines, as can be seen from the Sanscrit epics, "Mahabaratha" and "Ramayana." In the Tamil country

the same style was adopted mostly by Jains and Buddhists for the propagation of their own doctrines. In "Manimekalai" we have a very good example. The Jains and Buddhist of the post-Sangam period between A.D. 600 and 900 continued the same literary style, and produced the three great epics, "Valayapathi," "Jeevika-sinthamani" and "Kundalakesi."

There are also five other short epics which belong to the same post-Sangam period. They are "Chulamani," "Nilakesi," "Yasodra," "Udayakumar" and "Nagakumar."



THE CHOLA EMPIRE

PART II

CHAPTER I

The Chola Dynasty—the descendants of the great Karikalan—became almost extinct during the long centuries, when the Kalabhras, and after them, the Pallavas ruled over the fair land of the Kaveri. Nevertheless the Chola princes kept up their identity by intermarrying with the royal houses of Pandya and Chera, and many of them ruled as petty kings and chieftains in the Tanjore district. The endless wars between the Pandyans and the Pallavas had reduced this territory to a turbulent border country over which the bigger powers exercised but very little control. Even in these parts the Chola princes did not enjoy full independence. The real rulers of this border territory were the Muttarayan chiefs. These chieftains appear to have acknowledged the suzerainty of either Pandya or Kanchi, according to the political situation of the time. It was from one of these Muttarayan chiefs that Vijeyalayan captured Tanjore, possibly in the course of a local conflict. The defeat of the Muttarayan chiefs made Vijeyalayan king of all the territory stretching from Tanjore as far south as Pudukotta, comprising nearly half of the ancient kingdom of Chola.

The Chola Empire

Adityan I, known also as Rajakesari Varman, the son of Vijeyalayan became king of Tanjore about A.D. 880, almost about the same time that Aparajita succeeded to the throne of Kanchi. We have already seen how the Pandyans under Varugana-Varman, attacked the Pallavas and met with disaster at the battle of Sri Purambiam. During this war the Cholas were not really independent, but were subordinate to the Pallavas. There is difference of opinion among historians as to which side the Cholas took. However, sometime after this event Adityan I defeated Aparajita and crushed the Pallavas so completely that the whole of Tondaimandalam once more came under the sway of the Cholas. With the recovery of Tondaimandalam the ancient kingdom of Karikalan lived again. Rajasimha II, who became king of Pandya about A.D. 900 was an open enemy of the Cholas. He disliked the rapidity with which the Cholas began to recover themselves. It clearly showed that Pandya was in danger of an invasion in the near future. Before this happened, Rajasimha tried to check the growing power of his neighbour. War soon followed between the two Tamil kingdoms and it dragged on with varying results almost to the end of Adityan's reign.

Adityan I

The Chola Crown Prince Parantakan who had already distinguished himself as a capable leader, succeeded his father about A.D. 907. He already bore the title "Mathurakonda" (conqueror of Madura) which shows that he had taken an active part in his father's campaign against Pandya. Parantakan intensified the assault on Pandya, with the result that Rajasimha found it impossible to withstand the Cholas any longer. He appealed to Kasyappa, king of Ceylon, for help. The Sinhalese king realising well that Ceylon had to be defended in Pandya, immediately despatched a strong army including many horses and elephants. This took place about A.D. 920. Rajasimha taking heart once again continued the war with the help of the Sinhalese. But the Cholas proved themselves more than a match for the allies. About A.D. 923 a

Parantakan I

great battle was fought at Velur. Inscriptions mention that Parantakan defeated the Pandyans as well as the mighty army sent by the Lord of Ilum (Ceylon) and seized a herd of elephants together with the city of Madura. The allies were completely routed and Rajasimha fled to Ceylon taking with him the crown and other regalia. King Kasyappa did not live to see the inglorious defeat of his great army. Dappula who succeeded him was faced with many internal troubles and could not offer any help to Rajasimha. The unfortunate Pandyan king finding that there was little hope of obtaining help from Dappula, finally crossed over to Chera the native land of his mother, leaving behind the crown and other jewels with the Sinhalese king for safe-keeping. Rajasimha spent the rest of his days in Chera, no doubt in sad contemplation of his terrible misfortune. Parantakan now master of Pandya tried to secure the Pandyan crown and other jewels by friendly negotiation. But Dappula refused to give them up. Parantakan thereupon declared war on Ceylon and invaded the island in the reign of Udaya III about A.D. 945. The Sinhalese king who was not strong enough to face the invader, adopting past tactics, abandoned Anuradhapura and fled to the south. However he took care to remove the Pandyan crown and regalia, which he was determined not to surrender. Thus, although Parantakan took Anuradhapura, he did not gain his purpose. Before he could decide on further action against the Sinhalese misfortune overtook his troops in the Deccan. He was therefore forced to abandon the conquest of Ceylon and return to Chola.

The Rashtrakutas who like the Chalukiyas and the Maharattas were one of the new Dynasties that had sprung up in the Deccan after the fall of the Andhra empire about A.D. 300, had now grown into a powerful nation. They fought the Chalukiyas unceasingly and reduced their power a great deal. About this time Kannara Devan (Krishna III), the Rashtrakuta king, made up his mind to check the growing power of the Cholas, and when Parantakan was away in Ceylon invaded Chola in great force. The Cholas too were trying to expand their empire northwards into the Deccan. The two armies came to a clash at Takkola and the battle that followed is claimed by both parties as a victory. But unfortunately the Chola Crown Prince, Raja-Adityan who was in command of the Chola army died of his wounds a few days after the battle. When the Rashtrakutas heard this news they became bolder and actually penetrated into Chola as far as the capital, Tanjore. Thus the great warrior Parantakan lost not only his son and heir but also his empire and even part of his kingdom. The Pandyan taking advantage of his defeat refused to acknowledge his suzerainty. The Sinhalese too returned to Anuradhapura without any fear of the Cholas. Though Parantakan bore the title "Mathuraiyum Ilumum Konda" (conqueror of Madura and Ceylon) fate had decreed that this should be but an empty boast at the time of his death.

Gandar-Adityan
Arinjayan
Parantakan II
Uttama Chola
(A.D. 947-985)

The position of the Cholas, from the time they sustained defeat at the hands of the Rashtrakutas up to A.D. 985, was somewhat precarious. Parantakan's two remaining sons, Gandar-Adityan and Arinjayan ruled over Chola more or less in partnership. After them, Arinjayan's son Parantakan II became king. The new king tried to recover the lost empire, and invaded Pandya and Ceylon. This no doubt was a very rash act. In Ceylon he was defeated by Mahindu IV, and in Pandya, a worse fate awaited him. Vira-Pandyan the Pandyan

ruler was a very warlike monarch and yearned to take revenge for past indignities. At Chevur he won a great victory over the Cholas and he further claims to have killed the Chola king, who has now been identified as the ill-starred Parantakan. Parantakan's cousin Uttama Cholan then became king and ruled till A.D. 985. Very little is known about him, except that both, he and his mother, Sembian Mahadevi, were great devotees of Siva and not only renovated several temples but also built new ones.

Raja-Rajan I *(A.D.985-1012)*

Uttama Cholan was succeeded by Arunmoli-varman better known as Raja-Rajan the Great. Raja-Rajan was every inch a leader. Under his guidance the Cholas grew into a mighty power once again. The Rashtrakutas who had checked the expansion of Chola during the early part of the century, had been defeated and crushed by the Western Chalukiyas. Raja-Rajan therefore paid his attention to Pandya first. To found a Tamil Empire it was necessary first, to bring the three Tamil kingdoms under a single monarch. This was what Raja-Rajan accomplished first. Amarabhojana, the king of Pandya was defeated, and Pandya was re-named Raja-Raja mandalam or Raja-Raja-pandi-nadu. Chera was attacked both by land and sea. Vilinam, Kudalur, Salai and other Chera towns fell one after another and soon Chera too was forced to acknowledge the suzerainty of Raja-Rajan.

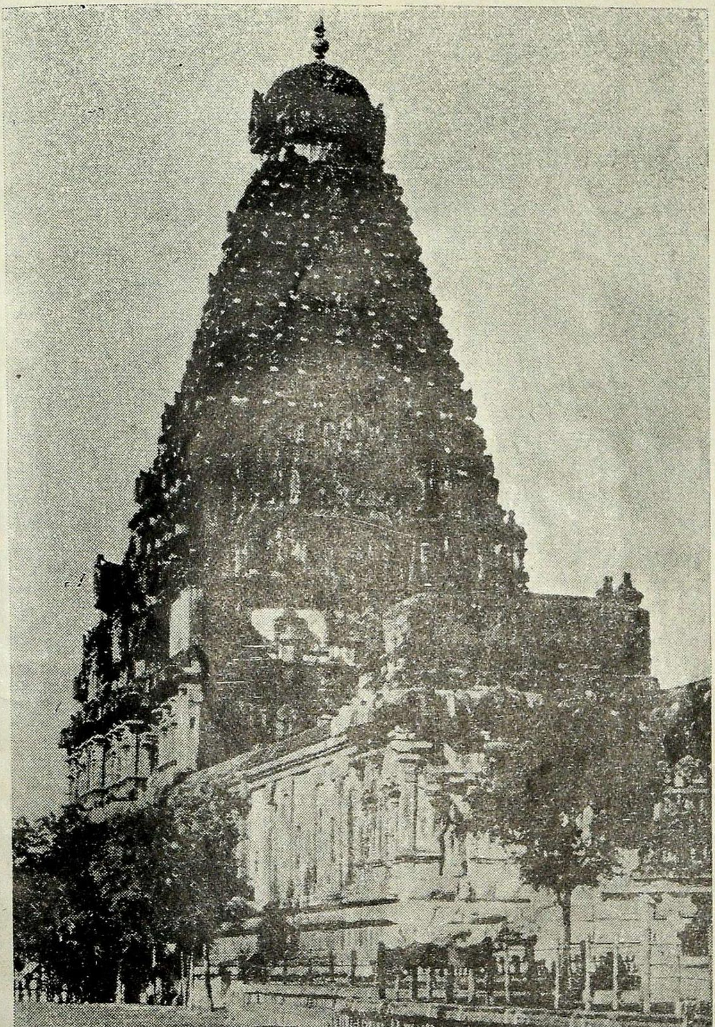
Northwards, the Cholas won victory after victory, and having forced Vengi or Eastern Chalukiya to submit, Raja-Rajan crossed the Godavari and entered Kalinga. Kalinga which even Asoka found so difficult to conquer, now fell an easy prey to the Cholas. Unlike his predecessors Raja-Rajan took care to see that his government was established firmly in the conquered countries. All these he accomplished before the 17th year of his reign, that is, before A.D. 1002. After the conquest of Kalinga, he turned southwards and invaded Ceylon. Sinhalese historians tell us that Raja-Rajan took advantage of the strained feeling that existed between the Sinhalese king Mahindu V, and his army, and invaded Ceylon at a time the Sinhalese were least able to defend themselves. Although Parantakan II was defeated by the Sinhalese, the political situation of Ceylon had been getting worse and worse ever since the invasion of Parantakan I. For several centuries past, the Sinhalese army had consisted mainly of mercenary troops, chiefly Tamils. This Tamil army in the service of the Sinhalese, often found itself in a position to control the political affairs of Ceylon.

In addition to this great drawback, the Sinhalese were faced with another great problem. The population of North Ceylon had by this time become predominantly Tamil. These Tamil settlers refused to be absorbed into the Sinhalese nation and remained separate maintaining close relationship with their kinsmen across the narrow straits. The Northern peninsula with a portion of the mainland indeed formed a separate kingdom ruled over by kings of Naga-Tamil descent. After the invasion of Parantakan I, the territory north of Anuradhapura ceased to belong to the Sinhalese, except occasionally during the rule of a powerful monarch. In times of invasion from the mainland, these Ceylon Tamils usually helped their kinsmen, and thus considerably weakened the resistive power of the Sinhalese.

King Mahindu V the contemporary of Raja-Rajan, and before him his brother Sena V, were both forced to flee to the south for safety as a result of mutiny in the Tamil mercenary army. It is said that these kings were unable to pay the troops, and apart from this, there is also reason to believe that these mercenary soldiers were unwilling to fight the Cholas who were daily threatening the island. Sena V (A.D. 972-981) found it impossible to rule from Anuradhapura owing to the great influence wielded by the Tamils, and had to remove his capital to Polonnaruva, leaving Anuradhapura and the northern territory in the hands of the Tamils. His successor Mahindu V tried to establish his government at the old capital, but when the mercenary army mutinied, he found himself so helpless, that he had to flee to the south to save his life. Thus the Tamil mercenaries, by their frequent mutinies and the consequent collapse of the Sinhalese government, more or less prepared the way for their kinsmen, the Cholas.

When Raja-Rajan the Great invaded the island about A.D. 1002 he met with hardly any resistance. He captured Polonnaruva and having established his government firmly, set sail westward towards the ten-thousand Isles, now known as the Maldives. He brought these islands as well as the Laccadives under his suzerainty. Sinhalese historians usually give the date of the Chola conquest of Ceylon as A.D. 1017—the year in which Mahindu V was captured and taken to Chola. But long before this event, about 1002 Raja-Rajan had established his government at Polonnaruva, and from his inscriptions we learn that he had even donated the revenue from certain villages in Ceylon towards the maintenance of the great temple which he built at Tanjore.

Tamil monarchs, from the time of the Pallavas, spent much of their wealth in building magnificient temples of granite, with lofty gopurams, decorated with exquisite sculptures and paintings, which have earned for the Tamil races the name—"The greatest temple builders of the world." A good many of these great edifices, no doubt considerably altered and renovated by successive generations of pious kings, can be seen to this day at Rameswaram, Madura, Conjeevaram, Sri-rangam, and numerous other places, scattered practically throughout South India. While the early Pandyans were lovers of literature and the Pallavas, lovers of architecture, the Cholas loved and encouraged both. The great temple built by Raja-Rajan even in its half-ruined state and robbed of its ancient glory, as it exists today is a thing of great architectural beauty. Its Vimana rises 216 feet, tier upon tier of granite sculpture, wonderful to behold. The top of the Vimana is crowned with a cupola weighing 80 tons, carved out of a single piece of granite. The crowning of the summit with such a heavy granite cupola, would be considered a feat of great engineering skill even in modern times. The bronze statues of this period are also considered the best of their kind ever cast in India. The Tamils of this period not only displayed skill in sculpture and architecture but were also great painters, and examples of their work can be seen in some parts of the Tanjore temple. It is believed that Raja-Rajan started work on this temple in A.D. 1003 after the conquest of Ceylon and finished the work before A.D. 1007, for his inscriptions state that he celebrated his victory over the Western Chalukiyas, by making valuable presents to this temple. The war with the Western Chalukiyas, who ruled over the greater part of the Deccan, was brought to a decisive end in the 22nd year of his reign, that



RAJA-RAJA'S TEMPLE
TANJORE

is about A.D. 1007. With the defeat of the Chalukiyas the whole of Dakshina, from the Vindhyas to Ceylon, came under the sway of a single Dravidian monarch, perhaps for the first time since Ravanna. Raja-Rajan lavished his wealth not only on Hindu temples, but also built a Buddhist vihare at Nagapatnam, and richly endowed it. This vihare was built on the request of King Chulamanivarman of Kedah in Malaya, for the benefit of the Buddhists from Malaya who were resident at Nagapatnam during this time. This shows that the Tamils were in close touch with the kingdoms of Further India, and inscriptions discovered in various parts of Malaya, show that Tamil merchants resided there in large numbers. After his victory over the Chalukiyas, Raja-Rajan handed over the reins of his government to his able son and heir Rajendran, who was crowned in 1012, during the life-time of his father.

Rajendran I
(1012-1042)

The new Emperor was a warrior of great repute. In fact most of the campaigns in which Raja-Rajan won fame and success, were, it is believed, planned and carried out by his illustrious son Rajendran. In the sixth year of his reign, that is, about 1017 he crossed over to Ceylon with the purpose of mopping up the rebels and guerillas who were still giving trouble, from their secure position among the hills and swamps of South Ceylon. In this campaign, Rajendran crushed all opposition, and eventually took Mahindu V prisoner, and further recovered the Pandyan crown and regalia, which had brought so much trouble and calamity on Ceylon. Rajendran changed the name of Polonnaruva into Jananathapuram and reduced Ceylon to a mere province of the great Chola Empire.

Rajendran brought Pandya too under his direct rule, by driving out the Pandyan king who, though subordinate to the Cholas had attempted to give trouble. To avoid further trouble in Pandya, he appointed his son as Viceroy with the title Chola-Pandyan. From his inscriptions we learn that he built for his Viceroy, a great palace at Madura "by whose weight even the earth became unsteady." Unfortunately even its site cannot be traced today.

Having thus consolidated the Empire which he inherited from his father, Rajendran started on a campaign of further conquests, in the tenth year of his reign (about 1021). From Kalinga, he over-ran Orissa, and defeated the Pala king of Bengal whose suzerainty at one time extended up to Kanauj (United Provinces). As a result this part of Aryavartha came under Chola rule. About this time Aryavartha was in a wretched condition. Between A.D. 1000 and 1030 the Afghan prince Mahmed made at least seventeen successful raids into Western Aryavartha. About 1005 he marched up to the river Jhelum. In 1008 he conquered Punjab. In 1018 he sacked the town of Mathura (Muttra) and Kanauj.

We notice therefore, that the Tamil invasion of Bengal and other parts of North India, took place about the same time as the Muslim invasion of India. The Muslims restricted themselves to the Punjab, Sind and other parts of the west, and did not reach Bengal till after the fall of the Chola Empire. Although the Cholas were Hindus the idea of a "Hindu Nation" did not then exist. The Tamils did not therefore go to the help of the Hindu kings of North India, in their wars against the Muslim invaders. On the other hand they proved themselves as much the enemies of the

Aryans as the Muslim invaders were. In an inscription dated the twelth year of Rajendran's reign (A.D. 1023) he claims to have conquered Mathuramandalam. Some think that this refers to the conquest of Pandya. We know however that Pandya was conquered by Raja-Rajan and that in the tenth year of his reign, Rajendran had appointed his son as Viceroy of Pandya, after driving the Pandyan king out of the kingdom. Although petty rebellions may have occurred, even after this, the suppression of these could never have warranted a record such as the inscription referred to already. Further, Pandya was known as Raja-raja-pandi-nadu, and not as Mathuramandalam. It is also known for certain that Rajendran started his invasion of North India in the tenth year of his reign, after strongly establishing his position in the Empire which he inherited from his father. Therefore in the twelth year of his reign, he would have been campaigning somewhere in the north. For these reasons the eminent scholar Dr. Hultzsch has recognized Mathuramandalam as the territory around the city of Mathura (Muttra) on the Jumma in North India. A few years before Rajendran's invasion and conquest of this region, the Muslim invaders had laid waste this district and therefore its conquest could not have been very difficult.

After his victories in North India, Rajendran built a new capital and named it Ganga-konda Cholapuram, in commemoration of his conquests right up to the banks of the Ganges. This city is now in ruins and only the Temple built by Rajendran now stands. It is mentioned that the Chola Emperor forced the vanquished kings of the North, to carry water from the Ganges all the way to the Imperial capital, where the sacred water was poured into a well that can be seen to this day. The Cholas proved invincible not only on land but even carried their victorious Tiger Flag far across the sea. The Chola fleet of this period was perhaps the largest ever possessed by an Indian nation. The whole coastline from Mangalore to Bengal now belonged to the Tamils. We know that from pre-historic times the Dravidians were an intrepid sea-faring race. It is little wonder therefore that with nearly three-fourth of India's coast in their hands, the Tamils became a maritime power greatly feared by all neighbouring countries.

It is not known why and when hostilities broke out between Chola and Kedah. Maravijayotunga, the son of Chulamanivarman remained a friend of the Cholas. But inscriptions well supported by later writings tell us that Rajendran defeated Sangarama Wijeyotunga the son of Maravijayotunga and having captured several cities and ports between Mapapalam in Lower Burma, and Sri-Wijeyam (Palembang) in South Sumatra, brought this vast territory under his rule. Several islands belonging to the Malay Archipelago, including Ma-nacavaram (Nicobars) also became part of the Chola Empire. Chinese records tell us that Sri-Wijeyam was a vast empire which consisted of Sumatra, Java, and several islands and states of Further India. The capture of its capital Sri-Wijeyam must have made the Cholas masters of the East Indies. Although the names of the conquered countries and captured cities are given, the identity of these Tamilized names is very doubtful, but there is no doubt whatever, that Rajendran brought the principal states of Further India under Tamil rule.

During the reigns of Raja-Rajan and Rajendran, there was a great influx of Brahmans from North India into the Tamil country. Ever eager to win the favour of the most powerful monarch of the day, these Brahmans did not miss the opportunity of becoming citizens of the great Chola Empire.

The Chola Emperors following the example of the Pallavas, encouraged the study of Sanscrit.

This classical language of the Aryans had now become the religious language of the Hindus, and besides, it was perhaps the only medium of communication between Chola and the subject nations of the north. Therefore the study of Sanscrit received much prominence during this period, so much so, it is said that once the Queen Mother rebuked Raja-Rajan for 'showing so much favour to Sanscrit instead of to his own Tamil.'

The Chola Emperors also did much to improve the agricultural resources of the country. Many huge irrigation tanks and numerous channels and dams were built. The Ponneri Tank, built during this period, even in its present ruined state, has a bund over sixteen miles in length and is now used as a country road. Perhaps the ancient glory of the Tamil race reached its zenith during the reign of Rajendran I, and his successors could do no more than keep their hold on the far-flung Empire, by constantly suppressing risings and rebellions.

Rajadhirajan
(A.D. 1042-1052)

Thus when Rajendran's son, Rajadhirajan ascended the throne rebellions broke out in various parts of the empire. He had to fight several battles in Chera and Pandya, before he could establish himself as Emperor. He claims to have defeated and killed Manabharana, a Pandyan prince, and Vira-keralan. He also drove out Sundera-Pandyan from Pandya. In Ceylon too there were risings and Rajadhirajan had to visit the island to attend to the rebellious Sinhalese. In the remote parts of the south, some pretenders to the Sinhalese throne were staging demonstrations against Chola rule. Rajadhirajan mentions four of them; one a Pandyan prince, and another, a refugee from distant Kanauj—Vikramabahu, the chief rebel and son of Mahindu V. and most of his accomplices were defeated and slain. Rajadhirajan then returned to Chola only to find that Western Chalukiya was up in arms. In the war that followed, Rajadhirajan met with an untimely end.

Rajendran II
(A.D. 1052-1064)

His brother Rajendran then ascended the throne. The new king had fought by his brother's side in all his campaigns, and therefore the change in rulership did not affect the policy of the Cholas. Rajendran carried on the war with the rebellious Chalukiyas with varying results. The Chalukiyas kept the Tamils so busy, that the empire began to show signs of decline. In Ceylon rebellions broke out afresh. On the death of Rajadhirajan in 1052 a Sinhalese named Lokesvara raised the standard of revolt in the South and established himself at Kataragama. Another named Kirti, believed to be of royal descent, rallied the Sinhalese among the wild hills of Central Ceylon. Kirti who appears to have had the larger following succeeded in winning over the southern rebels, after defeating Lokesvara's successor Kasyappa. Kirti who now possessed the status of a petty king called himself Vijayabahu, and declaring himself the rightful heir to the Sinhalese throne, tried to start a war against the Chola rulers.

All these risings were confined to the inaccessible and remote parts of the island and the Cholas could have done little to suppress them. Occasionally a powerful and well-armed expeditionary force would march

to the south to quell these disturbances, but the enemy would disappear into the hills and thus gave no chance for an open battle. This was exactly what happened when Vijeyabahu tried to organise a campaign. The Chola troops who went to crush the rebellion in the south found that Vijeyabahu had escaped into the hills. However when the Cholas withdrew to Polonnaruva, Vijeyabahu went back to the south, and remained in an out-of-the-way place called Tambalagama. The Chola troops however hunted him down, and he fled eastward beyond Tissamaharama, and took refuge in a rock fortress. Aided by the natural protection this fortress gave him, Vijeyabahu gained some success against his enemies, and emboldened by it, tried to carry the fight into Rajarata. His army however sustained a severe defeat, and he fled once again to a rock fortress called Vakirigala, and remained in hiding waiting for a better opportunity.

When Rajendran II died in A.D. 1064 the empire passed to Vira-Rajendran, the youngest son of Rajendran I. The new emperor was determined to bring the Chalukiya war to a close. At Kudalam he defeated the Chalukiyas, led by Prince Vikrama-Adityan, the second son of the Chalukiya king. The Western Chalukiyas were thus subdued once again. As a happy end to the conflict, Vira-Rajendran gave his daughter in marriage to the defeated prince and made him the governor of a province of Chola.

Vira-Rajendran
(A.D. 1064-1069)

About this time a young prince named Parakesari Rajendra Chola Deva, was king of Vengi. Although he appears to have been a favourite of the Chola chieftains, for some unknown reason the Emperor deprived him of his kingdom. This ex-king of Vengi was the son of Princess Kundavi, the daughter of Rajendran I. His father was Vimaladityan, king of Eastern Chalukiya or Vengi-nad. When Vira-Rajendran died in 1069, this prince, backed by Somesvara II, king of Western Chalukiya, and brother of Vikrama-Adityan, claimed the Imperial throne of Chola. In this he was also encouraged by certain Chola chieftains who perhaps found Adi-Rajendran the rightful heir a weakling. Vikrama-Adityan, however took the side of his brother-in-law, and Adi-Rajendran was crowned Emperor in 1069. Immediately civil war broke out between the two factions. Somesvara, king of Western Chalukiya who was anxious to throw off the Chola yoke, actively supported Parakesari. The ill-starred emperor Adi-Rajendran, met with defeat and death at the hands of the ambitious Parakesari, and in 1070 the victorious prince crowned himself as Kulottunga I.

Vikrama-Adityan however continued the war against his own brother Somesvara. Under Kulottunga he could not have remained governor of a Chola province and furthermore, he hated his brother for helping an usurper to the throne of Chola.

Two years later he defeated Somesvara, and became king of Western Chalukiya. To the last he remained an enemy of Kulottunga and found himself strong enough to keep the Cholas out of Chalukiya. Likewise during the five years Chola was plunged in civil war, the other subject nations, the Pandyans, the Cheras and the Sinhalese in the south, the Kalingas and others in the north, all succeeded in throwing off the Chola yoke. In Ceylon we saw how a prince named Kirti or Vijeyabahu, attempted to recover the Sinhalese throne but failed. This prince did not however give up hopes, but waited patiently for a better opportunity. When in 1069 civil war broke out in Chola, and as a consequence the central power lost

its hold on the empire countries, Vijeyabahu took the field once again. There is reason to believe that the Chola garrisons at Polonnaruva and Anuradhapura, were themselves engaged in evacuating the island possibly under orders from Adi-Rajendran who was being hard-pressed by his rival Kulottunga. The Sinhalese appear to have pursued the retreating Cholas as far as Anuradhapura which was occupied without much difficulty. In evacuating the Island a small section of the Chola garrison, called the Velaikkaras, was left behind, and Vijeyabahu was glad to engage these soldiers as mercenaries. However when the Sinhalese attempted to invade Chola in retaliation the Velaikkaras refused to obey orders, and the mutiny became so serious, that Vijeyabahu, who claims to have expelled the Cholas, had to leave his capital in a hurry and seek refuge once again in the rock fortress of Vakirigala. His inability to control the Velaikkaras who formed but a very small section of the Chola garrison, clearly shows that the Cholas were forced to leave the island owing to the unfortunate political situation at home, and not because of the military strength of the Sinhalese patriots. The Pandyans and the Kalingas too gained their independence during the period of the Civil War and it is interesting to note that these three countries, Ceylon, Pandya and Kalinga, became friends and allies no doubt for mutual protection against Chola. Vijeyabahu, king of Ceylon, married a princess from Kalinga, and also gave his sister Mitta in marriage to a Pandyan prince.

We know hardly anything about the fate of the Chola possessions in North India and Malaya. We have to assume that they lost all these countries during the Civil War and thus the far-flung empire, built by Raja-Rajan and Rajendran I finally collapsed for want of a strong ruler. With the defeat and death of Adi-Rajendran, the House of Vijeyalayan came to an end, and with it, the most glorious period of Tamil History.

CHAPTER II

When Rajendra alias Kulottunga I became king of Chola, he found that the great empire over which he longed to rule had vanished. However he was not dismayed. He made up his mind to recover all the lost imperial possessions, and almost from the day of his coronation he was at war with all his neighbours.

The Cholas and the Pandyans *(A.D. 1070-1216)*

Vengi-nad or Eastern Chalukiya was his by right; and he therefore seized it and placed his second son Raja-Rajan on the throne. He also brought parts of the tribal area around Chola under his direct administration. Then like all Tamil kings who aspired to be emperors, he was faced with the task of re-conquering the sister kingdoms of Pandya and Chera.

Kulottunga I *(A.D. 1070-1118)*

During the long period of Chola ascendency, just as it happened in Ceylon, in Pandya too there appeared several claimants to the throne, but unfortunately all attempts to recover Pandya from Chola domination had ended in disaster. Members of the Pandyan Royal family had established themselves in remote parts of the country, out of reach of the imperial troops of Chola, and thus kept alive the spirit of revolt. Sometimes, as it happened during the reign of Rajadhirajan, two or more of them would unite together in attempting to overthrow the Cholas. The civil war no doubt gave them the longed-for opportunity and like the other subject countries, Pandya too succeeded in winning back her independence. Nothing further is known about the struggle which the Pandyans had to put up before they overthrew Chola rule. But the names of two princes Parakrama Pandyan and Vira Pandyan—are mentioned in connection with the re-establishment of order and justice in Pandya.

Pandyan independence was however only short-lived for in 1075 Kulottunga attacked Pandya and won an important victory as a result of which the king of Pandya was taken prisoner and beheaded. The struggle however continued for nearly a decade. In 1094 Kulottunga finally crushed all resistance in Pandya. He claims to have driven five Pandyan princes who opposed him into the forest, and brought the whole of Pandya under his direct rule.

A Pandyan prince named Jatavarman Srivallabha, who was a junior contemporary of Kulottunga, has left numerous inscriptions scattered all over Tinnevelly and Madura districts. This shows that towards the latter part of his reign Kulottunga had considerably changed his policy towards Pandya and even granted ruling powers to some of the disinherited Pandyan princes.

Kulottunga also invaded Chera by sea and claims to have captured several ports. He sacked Salai on two occasions and forced certain Chera chieftains to pay tribute. It is not known however to what extent the sturdy mountaineers of Chera acknowledged Chola supremacy.

Kulottunga's greatest achievement was the conquest of Kalinga. The Kalinga war is described in great detail in the poem called "Kalingattu-parani." It is said that Kulottunga demanded tribute of Kalinga. The

king of Kalinga who had also recovered his kingdom during the civil war, refused to acknowledge Chola supremacy. Kulottunga therefore invaded Kalinga and devastated the country. The Kalingas were beaten in every battle and finally forced to submit once more to Chola suzerainty.

Towards the end of Kulottunga's reign the Kalingas gave trouble again, and Vikrama Cholan, the Crown Prince, assisted by Parantaka Pandyan, possibly the successor of Srivallabha, invaded the Telugu country. They defeated a Telugu chief named Bhima of Kulam, and also quelled all disturbances in Kalinga.

Kulottunga died about 1118 having reigned for 49 years. To some extent he succeeded in re-establishing the Chola empire.

Vikrama Cholan
(A.D. 1118-1135)

Vikrama Cholan who succeeded his father, had shown great promise as a prince. But unfortunately in the sixth year of his reign a terrible pestilence swept over the kingdom. This appears to have considerably reduced the strength of the Cholas. Besides, Vishnuvardena, the Hoysala king, marched southwards and devastated the Tamil country. Possibly taking advantage of this, a Pandyan prince named Maravarman Srivallabha succeeded in putting an end to Chola suzerainty.

Kulottunga II and Raja-Rajan II

Vikrama Cholan was succeeded by his son Kulottunga II about 1135, and after him Kulottunga's son, Raja-Rajan II, ruled till about 1162. Nothing is known about the political activities of these two monarchs.

Rajadhirajan II
(A.D. 1162-1178)

The next king Rajakesarivarman Rajadhirajan's relation to his predecessor, is not known. During the latter part of his reign, about 1168 or 1169 civil war broke out in Pandya, and both Chola and Ceylon became involved in this struggle.

Maravarman Srivallabha who began to rule over Pandya about 1132, proved a strong ruler. He made Tinnevelly his capital and even exercised suzerainty over South Chera, now known as Travancore.

Parakrama Pandyan and Kulasekhara Pandyan

On the death of Srivallabha about 1169, his son Kulasekhara, became king. The new king decided that he should rule from the ancient capital Madura. But this city was at this time occupied by another Pandyan prince named Parakrama, who ruled over North Pandya. Possibly Parakrama was in occupation of Madura even during the reign of Srivallabha. Whether he was an independent king or was subordinate to Srivallabha, is not clear. But when Kulasekhara attempted to take Madura, Parakrama resisted and appealed to the king of Ceylon for help.

The King of Ceylon during this period was Parakrama the Great. He was the grand-son of the Pandyan prince who married the Sinhalese princess Mitta. He had defeated the rightful heir to the Sinhalese throne, and become king by sheer might. He was the first Sinhalese king to possess a fleet, and like his Tamil ancestors he longed to conquer foreign lands. He was probably a near kinsman of Parakrama Pandyan, and therefore on receiving the appeal, he immediately despatched a powerful army to Pandya. But in the meantime Kulasekhara had defeated and killed Parakrama Pandyan, and occupied Madura. Undaunted by these

events, the Sinhalese army marched to Madura. On the way they gathered together all the supporters of Vira Pandyan, the son of the unfortunate Parakrama. It is said that the Sinhalese generals Lankapura and Jagad Vijaya, gave presents to many Pandyan chiefs, possibly in canvassing their support.

The combined armies of Parakrama Bahu and Vira Pandyan succeeded in capturing Madura but Kulasekhara escaped and fought his enemies most gallantly. However he lost battle after battle and was finally forced to leave Pandya and seek refuge in Chola. The Sinhalese say that Lankapura placed Vira Pandyan on the throne and returned home flushed with victory. But from Chola inscriptions we learn that the war did not end with the crowning of Vira Pandyan. Kulasekhara fled to Chola, and sought the help of Rajadhiraja. The king of Chola fearing that the war might spread into his own kingdom, assisted Kulasekhara with an army, which he despatched under the command of a young general named Pallavarayar. If the Sinhalese, as mentioned in the Mahavamsa, had really returned to Ceylon, the new development must have brought them back in a hurry. Pallavarayar forced his way to Madura, and in the battle that followed the Sinhalese generals Lankapura and others were taken prisoners and put to death and their heads nailed to the gateway of Madura. On the defeat of his Sinhalese allies Vira Pandyan must have fled from his capital, and Kulasekhara once again entered the city as king of Pandya.

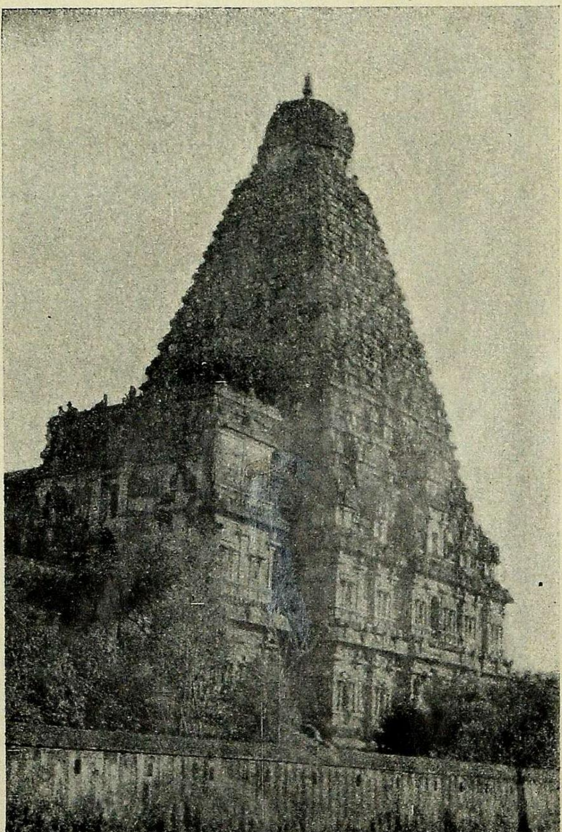
Parakrama Bahu, no doubt felt keenly the defeat his army had sustained in Pandya and prepared to take revenge by invading Chola. He therefore collected troops at Kayts, Mantai, and other northern ports, and made all arrangements to attack Chola by sea. At this time there lived a refugee Sinhalese prince named Srivallabha, in Chola. He was an enemy of Parakrama Bahu, and Rajadhirajan therefore sent him with a powerful fleet to attack the Sinhalese in their home waters. Srivallabha attacked the invasion ports, destroyed many coastal villages, and carried away much booty to Chola.

Kulottunga III
(A.D. 1178-1216)

On the death of Rajadhirajan about 1178, Kulottunga III was crowned king of Chola. Two years later, about 1180, Kulasekhara, king of Pandya died, and Vira Pandyan again attempted to seize the kingdom. Parakrama Bahu was still ready to help him, and with the help of his Sinhalese friends he appears to have met with some success. Kulasekhara's son Vikrama Pandyan thereupon sought the help of Kulottunga III, and thus the old struggle was renewed.

Vira Pandyan and his allies were unable to face the Chola troops who captured Madura and forced the Sinhalese to leave Pandya for good. After the defeat of Vira Pandyan, Kulottunga placed Vikrama Pandyan on the throne. Vira Pandyan tried once more to regain the kingdom, but at the battle of Nettur, he was badly defeated and taken prisoner. Kulottunga however showed mercy to his troublesome enemy and permitted him to spend the rest of his days in Chera, no doubt as an exile.

This brought the Pandyan civil war to a close. During Kulottunga III's reign Chola appears to have won back much of her former glory. Inscriptions (190 of 1907) discovered in the Tribhuvanam temple show that he won several battles against his 'northern' enemies and also claimed to have conquered Ceylon. He built two great temples, one at Tribhuva-



TANJORE TEMPLE

nam and the other at Darasuram, fashioned after the Tanjore temple of Raja-Raja. These temples were perhaps the last great edifices built by the Imperial Cholas and can be seen to this day. Kulottunga III was also the last of the great Cholas, for after him, the rulers of Chola were weaklings who allowed the kingdom to decline and finally disappear from the pages of history.

CHAPTER III

The Pandyan Empire 1216-1310.

Raja-Rajan III *(1216-1243)* **and Sundara-Pandyan I** *(1216-1238)*

The year A.D. 1216 witnessed the sad deaths of the two monarchs, Kulottunga III and Kulasekhara. The former was succeeded by his son Raja-Rajan III, who proved to be a weakling, while the latter was succeeded by his brother, Sundara Pandyan—a very ambitious and aggressive prince. The new king of Pandya soon forgot the help his predecessor had received at the hands of the Cholas, and about 1222 invaded this sister-kingdom. He set fire to Tanjore and Uraiyur, and devastated South Chola. Raja-Rajan fled from his capital and while retreating northwards fell into the hands of Kopperunjinga, a Pallava feudatory ruling over Sendamangalam (South Arcot district) and who appears to have suddenly turned traitor.

Both Raja-Rajan and Sundara Pandyan were related to the royal Family of Hoyasala, a comparatively new kingdom that had sprung up in modern Mysore. Raja-Rajan therefore appealed to the Hoyasala king Vira Narasimha II for help. The Hoyasala army under the command of Appana and Samudragopaya, invaded Sendamangalam and compelled Kopperunjinga to release his royal prisoner. Narasimha next determined to check the growing power of the Pandyans, marched southwards and captured Srirangam, and even claims to have set up a pillar of victory at Ramesvaram. It is difficult to know what exactly took place. However it is more than certain that the Pandyans and the Hoyasalas came to some agreement regarding the future of Chola. Narasimha styled himself 'the establisher of the Chola kingdom' and about the same time Sundara Pandyan's inscriptions tell us that he restored Chola to Raja-Rajan.

For his services however Narasinha annexed a portion of Chola and put his son Vira Somesvara as viceroy.

Sundara Pandyan also interfered in the affairs of Kongu, and as a result a portion of this kingdom came under Pandyan rule.

Towards the end of Sundara Pandyan's reign the Cholas rebelled and refused to pay tribute. This time the Hoyasalas did not come to their aid, and Sundara Pandyan inflicted a crushing defeat and forced Raja-Rajan to acknowledge Pandyan supremacy. To commemorate his victories the Pandyan Emperor issued coins, built temples and gave much encouragement to learning. Special mention is made of his minister Gurukulattarayan and two other chiefs named Malavar Manikkam and Kandan Udayanjeydan Gangeyan who like the king spent their wealth for the good of the nation. About 1238, after an eventful reign of 22 years, Sundara Pandyan wished to retire from public life, and handed over the government to a prince named Kulasekhara.

Jatavarman Kulasekhara II as he is known did not rule long. About December of the same year, he was forced to share the kingdom with another prince named Maravarman Sundara Pandyan.

From about the beginning of 1239 this prince became the real ruler. During his reign however, there existed a close relationship between the Hoyasala, Chola and Pandyan Royal Families. Chiefly on account of this, war and bloodshed was notably absent. However Pandya had to put up with much interference from Hoyasala. Vira Somesvara the Hoyasala king was "mamadi" or uncle to Sundara Pandyan and he appears to have used his relationship as an excuse for interfering too often in the affairs of Pandya.

Maravarman Sundara Pandyan II
(1238-1253)

Although Maravarman Sundara Pandyan ruled till about 1253, a prince named Jatavarman Sundara Pandyan joined him in administering the government as from April, 1251. This prince was very ambitious and soon started on a round of conquests. He invaded Chera and ravaged Malai-nadu (Malayalam) and ultimately forced the Chera king to acknowledge his supremacy.

Jatavarman Sundara Pandyan
(1251-1270)

About 1258 the Hoyasalas were driven out of the Tamil district which they had stolen from Raja-Rajan. In the region of the Kaveri, their commander Singana was defeated and killed. The struggle with the Hoyasalas appears to have gone on till 1262 about which time Vira Somesvara himself met with his death. About 1267 Vira Somesvara's son Ramanatha invaded Chola again and succeeded in occupying Kannanur and Srirangam till about 1271.

After the death of Vira Somesvara, Sundara Pandyan had to suppress a rebellion in Sendamangalam. The Pallava chieftain Kopperunjinga, who at one time rebelled against his Chola overlord, now showed himself antagonistic to Sundara Pandyan. However, when the Pandyans invaded his territory, Kopperunjinga appears to have lost heart and sent tribute suing for peace. Sundara Pandyan, knowing well that he was backed by stronger forces from the Telugu and Kannada countries, rejected his tribute and proceeded to punish the rebel chief. Kopperunjinga was later restored to his former position no doubt on his promising to be loyal in future.

After this the Pandyan emperor attacked Kanchi. This district was at the time under the rule of a Telugu prince named Gandagopala. Sundara Pandyan killed Gandagopala, and took Kanchi. In this campaign he came to a clash with several Telugu princes who appear to have been helped by certain Aryan kings. According to inscriptions found at Chidambaram, he 'inflicted a severe defeat on the Telungas slaughtering them and their allies the Aryans, right up to the banks of Peraru, and driving the Bana chief into the forest.' Thus at the end of this campaign, Sundara Pandyan found himself master of the entire Tamil-land, and he also exercised suzerainty over the Telugu country as far as Nellore. Kongu and a part of the Kannada country were also under his rule.

In all his campaigns Sundara Pandyan was ably helped by two subordinate princes named Vira-Pandyan and Kulasekhara. Vira-Pandyan who might have been a close relative of the king led in person the armies that conquered Chola, Kongu and other countries. About 1255 he invaded Ceylon. His record tells us that there were two independent kings in Ceylon. One of them was killed in battle, while the other was forced to

pay a tribute of jewels and elephants. Vira-Pandyan claims to have planted his victorious standard on the top of Konamalai and on the high peak of Trikuntagiri.

The two kingdoms referred to were no doubt the Tamil kingdom of North Ceylon and the Sinhalese kingdom of the south. Ever since the time of the Chola conquest, North Ceylon had remained in Tamil hands. Parakrama Bahu the Great united Ceylon including the north into one strong nation, but his successors failed to keep it up. The Tamils of Ceylon therefore, drifted apart again and formed themselves into a separate kingdom. The kings of Jaffna call themselves Aryans. They cannot therefore belong to the Tamil dynasties of Chola, Chera and Pandya. Their origin is indeed very obscure. Vijeya Bahu who became king of Ceylon after the fall of the Chola Empire married a princess of Kalinga. As was usual in those days this alliance by marriage would have brought to the island many Kalinga nobles as brothers-in-law of the king. Kalinga influence no doubt grew more and more as time passed until it culminated in the crowning of Kalinga Maha as king of Ceylon. It is possible that the kings of this Singai or Singapura Aryan Dynasty of Jaffna were really aryanized Kalingas—kinsmen of Kalinga Maha. Jaffna soon became powerful and succeeded in driving the Sinhalese out of Raja-rata. Even a portion of Ruhana, north of Bibile, became part of Jaffna kingdom. The Sinhalese kings, thus harassed by Tamils from Jaffna and Pandya, shifted their capital to fortresses in the central and western parts of the island. Of the two places mentioned by Vira-Pandyan, Konamalai—a Tamil name—is no doubt Thiru-Konamalai (Trincomalie). The other, Trikutagiri (a Sinhalese name) is believed to refer to a three-peaked mountain in the Kandyan district.

The Kingdom of Jaffna

Towards the end of Sundara Pandyan's reign, Maravarman Kulasekhara, who was perhaps a sub-king, became the real ruler. He opened his reign by putting down rebellions in Chera. Kulasekhara had four brothers all of whom ruled over various parts of the empire as co-regents. There was much unity among the brothers and as a result the empire reached the zenith of its prosperity during this period.

Maravarman Kulasekhara *(1268-1310)*

In 1284, it became necessary to re-conquer Ceylon. In fact there was so much trouble—riots, famine and pestilence in the island, that the Sinhalese king was barely able to look after himself. Bhuvaneka Bahu I ruled from a fortress called Yapahuva, thinking that he would be safe from Tamil invasions. Kulasekhara sent a powerful army under the command of an able general named Arya Chakkaravarty. The Sinhalese were utterly defeated and Arya Chakkaravarty captured the capital and carried away the tooth-relic to Pandya. The carrying away of the sacred relic, which for over twelve centuries the Sinhalese had guarded jealously, cast a great gloom over the country, and for the next twenty years or so Ceylon was ruled direct from Pandya. About 1302 a Sinhalese prince named Parakrama Bahu, went to Pandya and interviewed the emperor on behalf of the Sinhalese. He begged for the restoration of the tooth-relic and Kulasekhara showed his generosity by returning the relic.

This Arya Chakkaravarty may be identical with Jeyavira Singai Aryan, king of Jaffna, who according to the Yalpana Vaipava Malai, defeated Bhuvaneka Bahu and brought the whole island under his own flag. Per-

haps he did so on behalf of the Pandyan Emperor, for, it is further mentioned that at the end of twelve years Singai Aryan restored the Sinhalese throne to one Parakrama Bahu on the intervention of the Pandyan who personally guaranteed the payment of the customary tribute.

Kulasekhara's reign was long and prosperous. The wealth of the conquered countries poured into Pandya. Marco Polo the Venetian traveller who visited the Court of Kulasekhara has given a glowing account of the immense wealth the emperor possessed. He describes how much of this wealth was wasted in purchasing horses brought by Arab merchants. It is said that Kulasekhara purchased 10,000 horses an year, no doubt for his great and powerful army. The Tamil horsemen rode their steeds like demons even without stirrups, says Marco Polo. But he was not impressed with the common soldier, who according to him was a vegetarian and would not kill any living thing! Although Tamils ruled over a great part of the Deccan and Ceylon, the soldiers appear to have been very poorly armed, only spears and swords being in use. Much false beliefs and superstitions were also current among the people and Marco Polo describes how fishes —no doubt man-eating sharks—were charmed by Brahmans each morning before pearl divers went to work and how these Brahmans were paid one-twentieth of the total catch for their services! From the writings of another traveller named Wassaf we also learn that Pandya carried on a vast trade with foreign countries. He describes how ships from China and Malaya in the East, Hind and Sind in the North, Irak and Khursan in the West and even ships from European countries all brought their merchandise to Kayal, the chief port of Pandya. Such was the fame and prosperity of the Tamil country barely six hundred years ago.

CHAPTER IV

The Decline and Fall of the Tamil Dynasties.

Kulasekhara had two sons, one by his lawful queen and the other by a lady-in-waiting. Vira Pandyan, the illegitimate son was the elder of the two. He was also a bold and intrepid youth and was therefore allowed to associate himself with the government of his country from about 1296. Sundara Pandyan, his legitimate off-spring, though allowed to take part in the government from 1303, was not given so prominent a place as Vira Pandyan. Between 1310 and 1311, Kulasekhara wished to hand over the crown to one of his sons, and nominated the elder but illegitimate Vira Pandyan. This naturally enraged Sundara and in a fit of anger he murdered his royal father, and with the help of the army, crowned himself Emperor.

Kulasekhara who had ruled for 44 years was greatly loved by his people, and when the news of his murder spread throughout the empire there was utter confusion everywhere. Vira Pandyan determined to take revenge and collected an army to oppose the patricide. He received much help from the chieftains, and practically the whole country was at his back. Nevertheless Vira Pandyan was defeated at first, but in a second attempt he captured Madura, and forced his brother to acknowledge defeat. Sundara Pandyan, defeated and disgraced, fled from the kingdom and just as rashly as he had killed his father betrayed his motherland to the Mohammedans.

The last occasion we heard of the Muslim invaders was in the reign of Rajendra Cholan. While Rajendran was busy conquering Bengal and other parts of Eastern Aryavartha, the Muslims were trying to consolidate their position in the North-west, already under their sway. During the three-hundred years that followed, wave upon wave of Muslim invaders had swept over North India. With the fall of the Chola Empire they spread southwards into the Deccan.

Almost all the Hindu Kings were either overthrown or reduced in power. About the beginning of the fourteeeth century, it was only in South India that Hindu Raj still maintained power. In their southward drive the Muslims first came into conflict with the Hoyasalas, whom Sundara Pandyan, in 1262 had expelled from the northern Tamil districts. With Hampi as their capital, the Hoyasalas appear to have recovered themselves after Sundara Pandyan's death.

The Hoyasalas strengthened themselves by conquering and annexing the Kannada and Telugu districts immediately to the north of Tamil-nadu. The stout resistance offered by them temporarily arrested the march of the Muslims, and it was at this critical period that Sundara, the patricide, sought the help of Malik Kafur, the Muslim general. Vira Pandyan immediately sent an army of horse and foot to aid the Hoyasalas in their struggle against the common foe, the Muslims. Malik Kafur, no doubt aided by the traitor Sundara succeeded in avoiding the Hoyasala army, and swept into the Tamil country. Wassaf, the Muslim writer, tells us that several towns were captured chiefly because of the animosity that existed

between the two royal brothers. When Malik Kafur reached Madura, he found that the city had been abandoned, although a few elephants still remained in the temple premises. The Muslims plundered the temple and collected much booty, for they had no intention of staying long in Pandya.

Vira Pandyan, who had abandoned Madura and judiciously retreated southwards, suddenly appeared with a large and powerful army including numerous elephants, and Malik Kafur was forced to clear out of Pandya. But of course he carried away all the booty he had collected, which in gold alone must have been immense.

Although the first Muslim invasion of the Tamil-nadu thus ended in smoke, its immediate result was the collapse of the Pandyan Empire. Taking advantage of the civil war and the Muslim invasion that followed, the Telugu, as well as Chola feudatories threw off the Pandyan yoke. Vira Pandyan busy with home troubles, could have done nothing to prevent it.

As soon as the Muslim plunderers were got rid of, King Ravivarman Kulasekhara of Chera thought it a fine opportunity to take revenge on Pandya. He invaded the kingdom, defeated both Vira Pandyan and Sundara Pandyan, and proceeded as far as Kanchi, and finally crowned himself Emperor. But alas his glory was short-lived. The Telugu king who held sway north of Kanchi, sent his general Muppidi Nayakan against Kulasekhara. Muppidi Nayakan forced the Chera Emperor to give up the conquered territories and return home empty-handed. He brought the northern Tamil country consisting of Kanchi and Chola, under his direct rule and reduced Sundara Pandyan who was ruling over North Pandya to the position of a feudatory. Sundara Pandyan died about 1319 and after his death, Vira Pandyan set himself the difficult task of restoring the kingdom to its former position. He had barely succeeded in restoring some order and prosperity in the country when a second Muslim invasion overwhelmed him. This second expedition was sent by the Sultan of Delhi, mainly for the purpose of plunder. Khusru Khan, the general, did not spare any temple that stood on his way. He ravaged the country and carried away as much booty as possible.

About 1330, thus bled and weakened, the Tamils had to face the third Muslim invasion. The new Emperor of Delhi, Mohamed-Bin-Tughlak, anxious to annex this southernmost kingdom sent Jalaluddin-Ahsan-Shah, his general, to conquer Pandya. The Muslim army easily overcame the Tamils, and captured Madura. Jalaluddin appointed the first Muslim governor of Madura, soon set himself up as an independent Sultan, and little by little brought the country around Madura under his sway.

The Sultans of Madura were able to enforce their authority only in the urban areas, while in the interior Pandyan princes continued to rule more or less as independent monarchs. Thus the country became split up, with one authority in the Capital and several in the remote countryside. Law and order were therefore difficult to maintain, and this, added to the religious persecution started by the Muslims, turned the Tamil country into a veritable chaos.

The short but terrible mis-rule of the Muslim Sultans is well portrayed in the Sanscrit poem "Mathuravijayam" by the wife of the hero who ultimately forced the Muslims out of Pandya. It describes how the temples were neglected and jackals howled within the temple pre-

mises. Even Kaveri had joined in the destruction of the Tamil country by her frequent floods. The villages were filled with the foul smell of roasted flesh and the noise made by these Muslim ruffians. There was no order or justice and despair was evident in the faces of the unfortunate Dravidians.

However the Pandyan princes did not give up the struggle against the hated Muslims, and often acted in unity with the Hoyasalas.

About 1340 the Hoyasala king Vira Ballala III, was badly beaten by the Sultan of Madura at the battle of Kannaur Koppam. For the next twenty years all hopes of redeeming Pandya from the Muslim yoke had to be abandoned.

All this time the Telugu kingdom of Vijayanagar, situated on the bank of the river Tungabhadra, had been spreading southwards, by uniting together the smaller Kannada and Telugu kingdoms, against the common enemy—the Muslims. About A.D. 1364 the Tamil district of Kanchi or Tondai, had also become part of the Vijeyanagar Empire. The Pandyans unable to bear Muslim rule any longer, appealed to the Vijeyanagar chief, Kumara Kampana, who was then at Kanchi. A prince named Vira Pandyan was then ruling in South Pandya and a temple record in the 31st year of his reign describes the invasion of Kumara Kampana and the ultimate suppression of the Madura Sultanate. The inscription says "The times were Tulukkan (Muslim) times, the temple lands were taxed, however pujas had to be conducted without reduction; the cultivation of the temple lands was done by turns by the tenants of the village; at this juncture Kampana Udaiyar came, destroyed the Tulukkan, established orderly government throughout the country and appointed many Nayakars (Chiefs) for inspection and supervision in order that the worship in all temples might be revived and conducted regularly as before." The struggle appears to have continued for about eight long years, and it was only about 1378 that Madura was taken, and the Muslims forced to quit Dravidian country altogether.

Vijeyanagar and Jaffna

We have already seen how the northern part of Ceylon became an independent Tamil kingdom. From about 1310 the two ancient cities of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruva were in the hands of the Tamils, and Jaffna was really the more powerful of the two Ceylon kingdoms. Possibly the fall of Madura, and the occupation of the Tamil country by the Muslims brought many refugees to the Island. Some took service under the Sinhalese kings of the south, while many no doubt settled down among their kinsmen of Jaffna. By about 1340 the kingdom of Jaffna extended as far south as Puttalam, and even Adam's Peak appears to have been well within Jaffna's jurisdiction. The Sinhalese kings were reduced to the position of feudatories, and one of them—Vikrama Bahu III (1360-1374) is recorded to have paid tribute to Jaffna.

About 1385 however the Sinhalese succeeded in getting rid of Jaffna's suzerainty. A general named Alagakkonar built a fort in the marshy land east of Colombo and defied the power of Jaffna. He actually seized the emissaries of the king of Jaffna who had come to collect the usual tribute, and hanged them. This no doubt resulted in war. The Jaffna forces came both by land and sea. The land army reached Matale and the Sinhalese king fled from his capital Gampola. The forces that came by sea however met with a different fate at the hands of Alagakkonar who met

and defeated them at Colombo and Panadure. This put an end to Jaffna's suzerainty over the rest of the island—a position she had enjoyed almost from the time of Jeyavira Singai Aryan, who defeated Bhuvaneka Bahu.

Alagakkonar's nephew Vira Alakesvara who became king of the Sinhalese, and was carried away to China in 1410, has been described by the Chinese as a native of Chola and of Hindu faith. This is further confirmed by the Sinhalese work "Mayura Sandesa" where he is mentioned as the friend of Mahesvara (Siva). As the name suggests this famous Sinhalese family belonged to the "Konar" caste of South India, and according to inscriptions hail from Vanjipura in Malabar.

About 1385 Jaffna was invaded by Virupakha the son of the Vijeyanagar Emperor. He claims to have conquered Ceylon, although in truth it was the kingdom of Jaffna that he invaded. In all probability Jaffna was still the more prominent of the two kingdoms. The submission of Jaffna to Vijeyanagar brought all the Dravidian kingdoms under the authority of a single head, and this empire which was in reality a great federation of Dravidian Hindu nations, successfully withstood the onslaughts of the war-like Muslims for nearly two and a half centuries.

CHAPTER V

Tamil Literature Under the Later Cholas and Pandyans.

The Saiva and Vaishnava saints who gave Tamil a new form of devotional literature, were followed by others of similar temperament, such as Sathanar, Thirumular, Nakkirar, Nambiandir-Nambi and others. Of these the last named lived during the reign of Raja-Rajan I. Their works collected together under the titles, "Thiruvisapa," "Thirumantaram" and "Thirumurai" must be classed with the devotional literature of an earlier period.

The Chola Emperors after Raja-Rajan appear to have been too busy with their empire-building programme for until we come to the reign of Kulottunga I we cannot find any literary work of merit. However, we should remember that Rajendran who conquered parts of North India, brought many learned Brahmans from the North and settled them in various parts of the Tamil country.

These Brahmans did much to accelerate the sanscritizing of Tamil, and its result can be seen in the literature of Kulottunga's time.

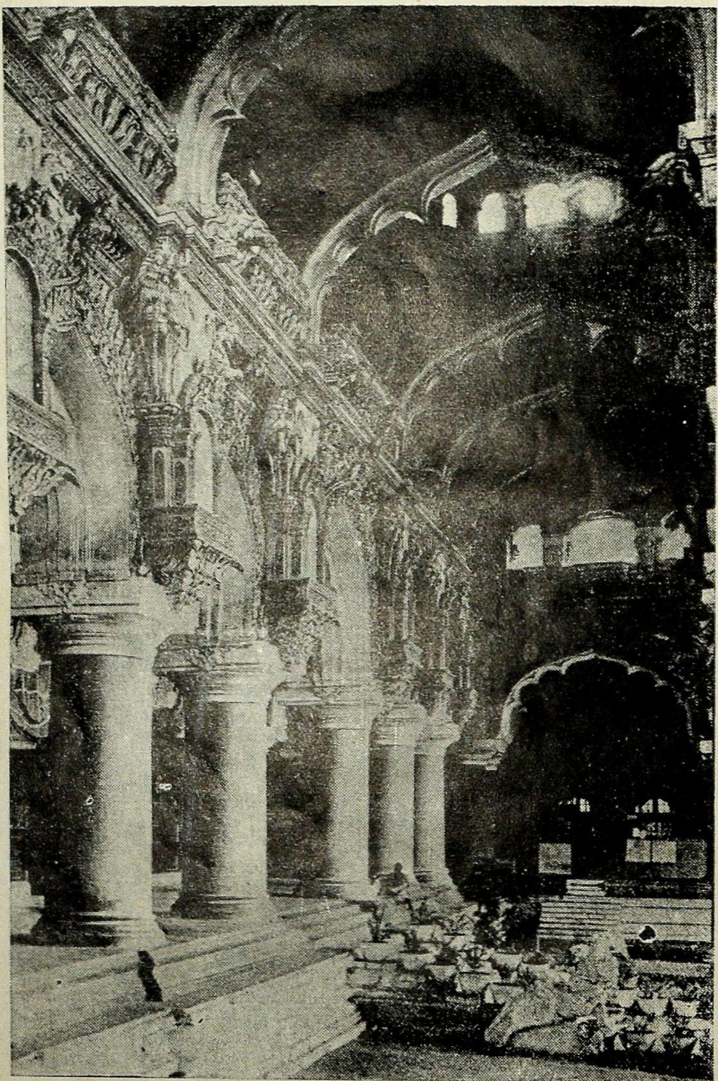
The best known of the post-sangam poets—Kambar—lived during this period. He took the plot for his work—the Ramayanam—from the original Sanscrit. Other works such as "Paratha-venba" by Perundevanar, "Nala-venba" by Pukalandi and "Thakayakaparani" by Oddakkuthar, are all based on the Sanscrit Epics and Puranas, and betray to what extent Tamil poets had become dependent on Sanscrit.

The only exception perhaps was Poet Jayamkondar, whose poem "Kalingattu-parani" describes the famous victory of Kulottunga I. over the Kalingas. This is of great historical value and beautifully portrays the martial age of the Tamils.

From a religious point of view however, the most important work of this period is the "Peria-puranam" by Sekkilar. The exaggerated descriptions peculiar to the Sanscrit Puranas, now came to be imported into Tamil. The "Peria-puranam" however deals with the wonderful lives of the Nayanars, and in spite of its 'puranic' language, it is the only authentic record we possess of our great poet-saints.

Apart from these, several grammatical works also appeared during this period. "Nan-nool" perhaps the best known of these, though based on the Tolkkapiam, is a concise work suitable for students. With the fall of the Tamil Dynasties, Tamil had to take a subordinate position giving place to Telugu, Kannada and Sanscrit. Religious poets usually made use of Telugu, and it was in this language that "Carnatic" musical compositions, as distinct from the earlier Tamil poetry, began to appear.

Nevertheless, numerous Tamil poets and saints, including some Pandyan princes of Tinnevelly, lived during the regime of Vijeyanagar and after. These failed to receive the prominence they deserved. Lately an attempt has been made to bring them to the limelight, through the help of benefactors such as Zamindar Pandithurai Thevar, who inaugurated the Fourth Tamil Sangam, and Raja Sir Annamalai Chettiar who founded the Annamalai University, destined to be the centre of Tamil learning and culture of the future. However, the classical age of Tamil literature really came to an end with the ancient Tamil Dynasties—the Cholas, Cheras and Pandyans.



PALACE OF THE NAYAKA DYNASTY
MADURA

CHAPTER VI

The Nayaka Dynasty and the British.

The expulsion of the Muslims from South India and the establishment of the Vijeyanagar empire greatly enhanced the reputation of the Dravidians in the eyes of the rest of Hindu India. Nevertheless, to the Tamils as a separate unit, this was the beginning of their end. It was the Telugu and Kannada sections of the Dravidian race, who took an active part in the great struggle against the Muslim invader. Therefore the Tamils had to be satisfied with a subordinate position. Under the Vijeyanagar Empire, the ancient dynasties of Chola and Pandya were restored to power once again. But their former glory was gone and they were mere vassals of a well-organised empire. Possibly as a precaution against the empire breaking up into warring states, Telugu and Kannada chieftains were made to settle down in various parts of the Tamil country. In Madura a Telugu chief was appointed as adviser to the king, with more or less similar powers as enjoyed by British residents in the Native States of India today. These chiefs little by little arrogated to themselves much of the Kings' powers, and by 1483 began to style themselves as Mathurapuri-Maha-Nayakas.

Practically nothing is known about the Tamil Kings of Chola and Pandya who ruled as subordinates of the Vijeyanagar Emperor. No doubt the politics of the Tamil-nad were overshadowed by those of the Empire.

South Pandya had become the stronghold of rebellious princes during Muslim rule and the situation did not change even under Vijeyanagar. A king named Jatavarman Vikrama Pandyan ruled over Ramnad and other parts of the extreme south from A.D. 1401-1422. The most successful rebellion was led by a prince named Arkesari Parakrama whe ruled over South Pandya from A.D. 1422 to A.D. 1462. He successfully pitted himself against the might of Vijeyanagar, captured Madura and held it for some years. He was also known as Korkai-Vendan, which shows that he was really king of the southern sea board comprising the Ramnad and Tinnevelly districts. He was however defeated at the end by the Vijeyanagar general Narasa and forced to return to his original stronghold in the Tinnevelly district.

Pandyans of Tinnevelly

Parakrama Pandyan was a pious king and despite the limited fortune of his dynasty he built the great temple at Tenkasi and also improved many others.

This branch of the Pandyan Dynasty made Tinnevelly their capital and ruled over the south till about 1652, and thereafter disappeared from the pages of history. They were by no means independent although they often pretended to be so in their inscriptions; time and again, the Emperor had to interfere in their affairs. For example in 1534 the ruler of Travancore, who was also a feudatory of Vijeyanagar, attacked Sri Vallabha, king of South Pandya and the Emperor Achyutaraya had to intervene by leading an expedition to the extreme south. This also resulted in the marriage of the Emperor to a Pandyan princess.

The successors of Parakrama Pandyan enjoyed little or no political power but they spent their time and wealth in building temples and other

public edifices. They were also men of learning and encouraged poets. And thus for a time Tinnevelly and not Madura, became the centre of Tamil culture.

The Nayakar Dynasty

About 1559 Virasekhara, king of Chola, attacked his Pandyn contemporary and drove him out of Madura. The Emperor thereupon sent his general Namaka Nayakar to punish the aggressive ruler of Chola. Namaka Nayakar captured Madura and instead of re-instating the Pandyan as ordered attempted to become king himself.

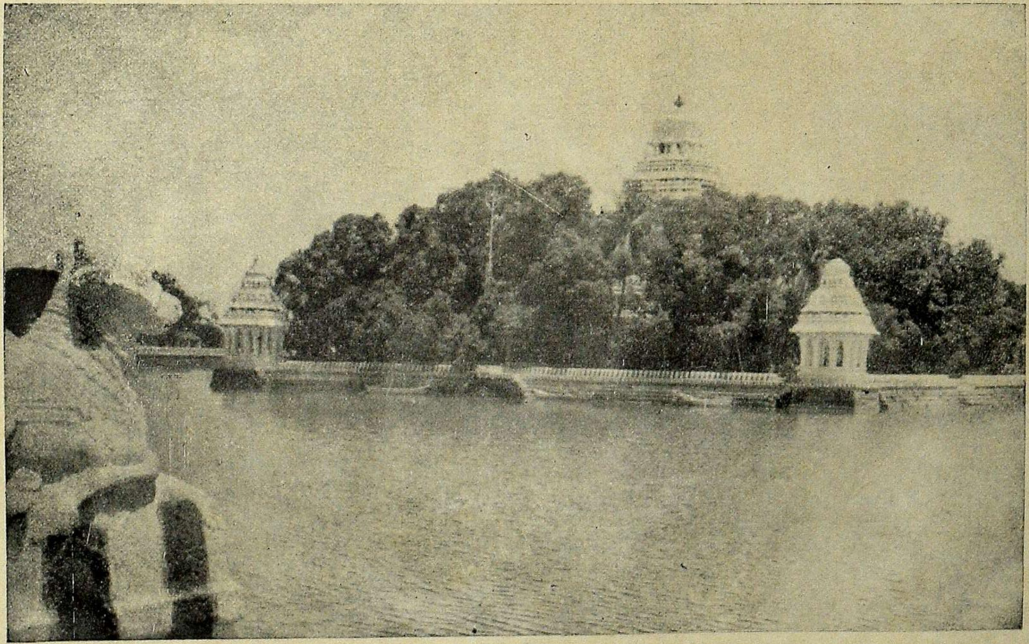
This resulted in the Emperor sending an army under the command of Namaka's own son Visvanatha, with orders to bring his disloyal father dead or alive to Vijeyanagar. It is said that Visvanatha Nayakar himself volunteered to do so, seeing that none else would undertake the task. Visvanatha defeated his father, and took him prisoner to the imperial capital. On his son's request Namaka was pardoned, while Visvanatha himself was appointed to the governership of Madura with the hereditary right of succession.

Visvanatha Nayakar was much more than a governor. In fact he was the real ruler of Pandya. This arrangement did not suit the Pandyan princes of Tinnevelly, and five of them joined hands in opposing Visvanatha Nayakar. An expedition to the south resulted in heavy loss to the Madura troops as the rebels adopted guerilla tactics. Thus frustrated, it is said Visvanatha Nayakar challenged the Pandyans to single combat, and defeated them one by one. This led to the pacification of the south, and Visvanatha was able to establish some sort of order throughout the entire kingdom. He divided Pandya into 72 sub-divisions or "palayams" and placed the administration of each palayam in the charge of a chief or palayakaran (polgar). A good many of these chiefs were no doubt Telugu and Kannada soldiers who had accompanied Visvanatha to Pandya, and who had now to be suitably rewarded. In the extreme south however Visvanatha had to depend on the goodwill of the war-like and semi-independent Marava chiefs.

Visvanatha ruled till 1563 and after him his son Krishnappa Nayakar became king. Two years later, the city of Vijeyanagar was sacked by the Muslims, and the Emperor was forced to shift his capital to Chandragiri. The kings of Mysore, Tanjore and Madura however remained loyal to the Emperor. Krishnappa claims to have invaded Ceylon and defeated the king of Kandy at a place named Pattalam (Puttalam ?).

From 1573, Krishnappa's two sons, Krishnappa and Visvanatha, jointly ruled over Pandya. In 1595 the two sons of Krishnappa, Elingia Nayakar, Visvappa Nayakar, became joint rulers and carried on the government till 1602.

In 1602 Elingia Nayakar's son Muthu Krishnappa Nayakar became king. He gave Ramesvaram and the adjoining mainland known as Sethunad to a descendant of the old Pandyan Dynasty with the title Sethupathy and also made him chief of the 72 Palayakaras. He died in 1609 leaving three sons, Muthu Veerappa, Thirumalai and Kumara Muthu Veerappa. Of these, the eldest, Muthu Veerappa Nayakar ruled till 1623. During his reign the king of Mysore attempted to conquer Madura, but the Palayakaras unit-



TANK AND PLEASURE GARDEN
MADURA

ed together and drove back the invader with heavy loss. The Muslims began to make further inroads into the now tottering Vijeyanagar Empire.

Thus when Thirumalai Nayakar came to the throne the power of the Emperor had declined so much that he thought it unnecessary to continue as a subordinate of Vijeyanagar. Pandya had now recovered much of her ancient prosperity, and Thirumalai started to rule as an independent sovereign. Nevertheless the Muslim menace still demanded unity among the Hindu nations and the existence of a paramount power such as an emperor had its great advantage, as we shall soon see. The Nayakars of Tanjore and Senchi also followed the example of Thirumalai, and declared themselves independent rulers. Mysore however remained loyal to the emperor and even attempted to punish the rulers of the Tamil country. The Mysore army marched southwards as far as Dindigul. Thirumalai Nayakar sent his general Ramappa Iyer with a powerful army, to meet the invaders. At the battle of Dindigul the Mysorians were badly beaten and driven back into the hills of their homeland.

Some years later the Emperor wishing to subdue the rulers of the Tamil country attacked Madura. Thirumalai had for his allies the Nayakars of Tanjore and Senchi, but was yet unable to prevent the Emperor from gaining some initial success. Seeing the danger that threatened Pandya, Thirumalai urged the Sultan of Golconda (now part of Hydrabad) to attack the Emperor. The Sultan not only did so but, after ravaging a part of the Andhra or Telugu country, marched southwards into Pandya. To counteract this move, Thirumalai urged the Sultan of Bijapur (also part of Hydrabad) to attack Golconda. However instead of attacking Golconda, Bijapur actually joined hands with the sister Muslim state, and their combined army suddenly appeared before Madura. Thirumalai was at his wit's ends, but the Emperor, seeing the unity of the Muslims, forgot the past, and immediately came to the rescue of Pandya. Nevertheless the Muslims were too strong even for the allied Hindu army and Thirumalai was forced to pay tribute and acknowledge the suzerainty of Bijapur. As soon as the Muslim menace was thus averted, the Emperor attempted to punish Thirumalai, with the aid of Mysore. Once again Thirumalai urged Bijapur to attack Mysore, and the Muslims after devastating Mysore, marched on Madura. Again Thirumalai had to pacify them with a large sum of money. Some years later Mysore for the third time invaded Pandya. This time, Thirumalai did not ask for Muslim help which had been very costly.

Earlier in his reign Thirumalai had some misunderstanding with the Sethupathy, who was also the chief of the Palayakaras. Therefore it is said he urged his queen to write to the Sethupathy appealing for help. When the Sethupathy received the queen's letter, he immediately collected a large army, and went to the king's aid. As a consequence the Mysore army was defeated and driven back into the hills. Later Thirumalai's brother Kumara Muthu Veerappa led an expedition to Mysore and ravaged the hill-country. Before the victorious army returned to Madura, Thirumalai Nayakar died at the age of 75. In spite of the incessant wars, Thirumalai's reign saw the city of Madura improve a great deal. He built the magnificent palace a portion of which stands to this day. He also built the "puthumandapam" extension to the Meenachi Temple. The beautiful tank and several other amenities are also ascribed to him.

The next ruler was Muthu Alakandi Nayakar, the son of Thirumalai. He fortified Trichnopoly as a protection against the Muslims. A few years later the Muslims actually attacked Trichnopoly, but finding it well fortified, marched on Tanjore and captured that city. Afterwards they returned to Trichnopoly, but owing to famine and sickness were obliged to leave Pandya after obtaining a small tribute.

Thus, as time went on, the Muslim menace grew more and more deadly, while the solidarity of the Hindu nations broke up by petty quarrels and wars.

Alakandi died in 1662, and his son Sokanatha became king. The new king in his anxiety to stem the Muslim infiltration quarrelled with his neighbour the king of Tanjore, and also with the Sethupathy. He had to pay large sums of money again and again to the Muslims to keep them from attacking Pandya. Attributing this humiliation to the refusal of help by the king of Tanjore, Sokanatha Nayakar attacked Tanjore and captured the city after a cruel fight in which the king of Tanjore and his whole household perished.

Tanjore however appealed to Bijapur for aid and the Muslims, only too glad to interfere in the affairs of the Tamil kingdoms, immediately despatched an army under the command of a Maharatta general named Ekoji.

Ekoji captured Tanjore, and began to rule the kingdom himself. In the south the Maravas rose up in rebellion, while in the north Mysore got busy again. Thus Sokanatha Nayakar's reign was marred by many useless wars and meaningless bloodshed.

When Sokanatha's son, Ranga Krishna Muthu Veerappa became king in 1682, the whole country was in a state of unrest. But fortunately, the Muslim states of the Deccan—Bijapur and Golconda—refused to recognize the suzerainty of the Emperor of Delhi and as a consequence the Muslims themselves split into two camps. The Tanjore Maharattas also had their differences with Mysore, and while the enemies of Pandya were thus occupied, Muthu Veerappa managed to establish some order in his kingdom. Unfortunately he did not rule long and he died suddenly in 1689.

The next heir to the throne was yet unborn at the time of his father's death. Therefore the Queen Mother Mangammal, took up the reins of government and ruled most efficiently. She forced the troublesome ruler of Travancore to pay tribute, and further attempted to curb the growing power of the Tanjore Maharattas. But one great blunder she committed, and that was to antagonise the Sethupathy. The Sethupathy did much as he liked and in various ways ignored the authority of Mangammal. The Maharattas whom Mangammal had brought to terms offered their help, and thus backed by the Tanjore army, she invaded Sethu-nad. The Sethupathy, better known as "Kelavan" Sethupathy (old man), quite undaunted, faced the combined army of Tanjore and Madura and inflicted a severe defeat. His army, which was entirely composed of war-like Maravas, took the Maharattas by surprise, and having killed the Queen's general, Narasappa Iyer, drove the invaders clean out of Sethu-nad. From this time onwards, Sethu-nad remained independent of Madura.

Vijeya Sokanatha Nayakar, the son of Muthu Veerappa, began to rule from 1704. During his reign Sethu-nad became split up into several chieftanates thus losing much of its unity and strength. Vijeya Sokanatha died

in 1731, and there being no heir, his queen Meenachi Amma took over the government. She however adopted the son of Pangaru Thirumalai Nayakar a near kinsman and appointed him as the next heir. Some years later Pangaru Nayakar himself claimed the throne. To settle the dispute both appealed to the Nawab of the Carnatic. The Nawab who had his own plans regarding Pandya, decided in favour of Pangaru. But while Pangaru was ruling in Madura, the Nawab sent his general Chanda Sahib, to conquer Pandya. The very fact that the Nayakas had to refer their domestic quarrel to be settled by the Nawab showed how weak they were. Chanda Sahib captured both Madura and Trichnopoly and installed himself as ruler.

With Meenachie Amma and her successor Pangaru Nayakar, the Nayakar Dynasty of Madura came to an end, and Pandya ceased to be a kingdom.

* * *

Chanda Sahib did not rule long. A few years later the Tanjore Maharattas invaded Madura and took him prisoner. In 1743 the Nizam of Hydrabad invaded Mysore and having conquered the Carnatic and the southern Tamil countries, placed them under the rule of his subordinate, the Nawab of Arcot.

In 1748 Chanda Sahib was released by the Maharattas, and he immediately claimed the countries ruled over by the Nawab of Arcot. Now, the British and French East India Companies, who had acquired much land in South India, began to interest themselves in local politics. The French took the side of Chanda Sahib, and the British supported the Nawab of Arcot.

In the clash that followed the Tamil country was laid waste. The land remained uncultivated, and famine and pestilence took heavy toll of the poor Dravidians. For want of a responsible government lawlessness was rife everywhere. The Palayakaras, particularly the Marava chieftains, acknowledged the authority of the Muslim rulers, only under military compulsion, and consequently the country was in a state of perpetual unrest. The Maravas finding that none could check them took more and more to highway robbery and looting.

Little by little the British got the better of their enemies, and succeeded in helping their ally the Nawab of Arcot to become the ruler of practically the whole of the Tamil country. But the real power behind the Nawab was no doubt the army of the British East India Company.

The Palayakaras were however very difficult to manage and the Nawab found it impossible to collect the revenue from them. Therefore, the work of collecting the revenue was entrusted to the British East India Company in 1781, and from this time up to 1800, the British carried on a ruthless war against the Maravas, reducing them to subjection and destroying their fortresses one by one.

In 1801 the British who had their headquarters at Madras brought the southern country formally under their jurisdiction, and granted a

general amnesty to the people. Within a short time, the whole of Dravida, consisting of the Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Tulu and Malayalam speaking countries of India, came either directly or indirectly under the rule of the British. For administrative purposes all Dravidian districts were constituted into a single province and this, no doubt, helped the various Dravidian groups to forget their past and develop a common outlook on matters relating to the Dravidian country and its political future.

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INDEX

A Page

Acyuta 32
Achyutaraya 65
Adigan 37
Agastiya 15
Agastiyam 15
Aham 18
Ahapporul 14
Ahananuru 18
Anuradhapura 13, 44, 51
Asela 12
Alexander 11
Aryan Rishis 5
Arya Chakkaravarty 58
Asarakkovai 20
Asoka 21, 24
Andhras 24, 44
Ameravati 24
Amerabojana 44
Ainguru-nuru 19
Ainthinai-aimpathu 19
Ainthinai-elupathu 20
Attila 33
Arikesari Maravarman 36
Arikesari Parakrama 65
Avanti 26
Ay 36
Alvars 41
Appar 41
Asuras 6
Arinjayan 44
Adityan 38
Andal 41
Adi-Rajendran 50, 51
Arcot 56
Alagakkonar ... 62, 63
Annamalai 64
Alakandi 68
Aparajita 38

B

Brahmi 21
Bakthas 41
Bhutattalvar 41
Bindusara 12
Brahma 14
Bijapur 67, 68
British East India Co. 69

Page

Bhairava 28
Bhuvaneka Bahu 58

C

Ceral Irumporai 18
Cheran Senguttavan 25
Chulamanivarman 48
Chalukiyas 34
Chola Empire 43
Chulamani 42
Chanda Sahib 69
Citra 28

D

Dasyu 5
Dakshinapada 7, 8
Darasuram 55
Danurdhana 28
Dappula 44

E

Ealathi 20
Ellalan 12, 13
Elingia Nayakar 66
Ekoji 68

G

Gautama 11
Gamini 13
Ganga Dynasty 36
Gandar Adityan 44
Gangeyan 56
Gangakonda Cholapuram 48
Guttika 12
Guptas 24
Gurukulattarayan 56
Golconda 67

H

House of Vijeyalayan 51
Hultzsch, Dr. 48
Hoyasala ... 56, 57
Huns 33
Hind 59

I

Illango Adigal 20

	Page
Imayavarmban	25
Irumbada Thaliyar	25
Illantraiyan ...	33
Indra	5

J

Jatavarman	57
Jaffna	58, 62
Jayamkondar	63
Jatavarman Vikrama	65
Jalaluddin	61
Jeevikasinthamani	42

K

Kalinga	7
Karunadar	7
Kannadas	7
Kadungon	14, 33, 34
Kapatapuram	15
Kosala	7
Kalittogai	19
Karnarppathu	19
Kalavalinarppathu	19
Karikalan	25, 26, 27
Kaverippattinam	26
Kurinjippattu ...	19
Kudagu-nadu	27
Kannakai	28
Kanaka	28
Kalabhra	32, 33
Kanchi	32, 33, 35
Kongu	36, 37, 57
Kuru-nadu	36
Kuruntogai	19
Kayavagu	29
Koccadayan	36
Kulasekeralvar	41
Kundalakesi	42
Kannara Devan	44
Kedah	48
Kulottunga I	50, 51, 52
Kulasekhara Pandyan	53
Kulottunga III	54, 55
Kopperunjinga	57
Kalinga Maha	58
Konamalai	58
Khursan	59
Khursu Khan	61
Kumara Kampana	62
Kayal	12, 59
Korkai	12

	Page
Krishnappa Nayakar	66
Kirti	49

L

Lanka	7, 11

M

Mohan-jo-Daro	3
Macedonia	11
Musiri	12
Maravas	13
Middle Sangam	15
Mudattiru Maran	15
Mahara Yal	17
Maran-valudi	19
Mullaippattu	19
Mathurai-kanchi	19
Malaipadukadam	19
Mauryan	21
Mahavamsa	28
Mahendra-varman	34, 41
Manavamma	35
Marangari	37
Maran Eyinan	37
Mahinda	37
Mahatalita	37
Maravarman Rajasingha	36, 38
Maran Vallahaba	37
Mahabalipuram	35
Maravarman Kulasekhara	58
Marco Polo	59
Malik Kafur	61
Muppadi Nayakar	61
Mohamed-Bin-Tughlak	61
Mathuravijayam	61
Manimekalai	20
Mahesvara	63
Manicavasagar	41
Mangammal	68
Meenachi Amma	69

N

Nakkirar	14, 15, 16
Narrinai	19
Nedunalvadai	19
Nallanduvanar	19
Naladiyar	19
Nalankilli	25
Nedunjeliyan	25, 29
Nedunjadayan	37
Nrputungavarman	38

	Page
Namaka Nayakar	66
Nandivarman	37
Nawab of Arcot	69
Nagas	11
Nathamuni	41
Nammalvar	41
O	
Oddakkuthar	64
Oviar	27
P	
Perunarkilli	25
Pallavarayar	54
Perialvar	41
Periyal	17
Peyalvar	41
Parantaka	37, 43, 44
Pangaru Nayakar	69
Poyhaialvar	41
Pandithurai Thevar	64
Parakrama Bahu	53, 54
Pulakesin	34
R	
Rigveda	5
Rajasimha I	36
Rajasimha II	38
Ramayana	41
Raja-Rajan I	45, 46
Rajendran I	47
Rajadhirajan I	49
Rajendran II	49
Rajadhirajan II	53
Raja-Rajan III	56
Rashtrakutas	44, 45
S	
Sumerians	2, 3
Sena	12
Sena I	37
Sangam	14, 15, 16, 18, 20, 24
Sankodi Yal	17
Siruppanarruppadai	19
Senguttavan	27, 28, 29
Samudra Gupta	33
Sendan	35

	Page
Sankara	40
Sri Wijeyam	48
Samparan	5
Sundra Pandyan	49, 56, 57, 58
Silapathikaram	20, 28, 29
Somesvara	50
Sri Vallabha	53
Sundaramurthi	41
Sengana	57
Sultan of Madura	61
T	
Tolkappiyanar	15
Tolkappiyam	15
Tirumurugarruppadai	19
Tirukkural	20
Talaiyanganam	29
Tiriyas	32
Tiruppanalvar	41
Tondaiman	32
Tondai	32
Tribhuvanam	54
Thirumalai Nayakar	66, 67
Tondaradippodialvar	41
Tirugnanasampanthar	41
Tirumalisialvar	41
U	
Ugrapperuvaludi	15
Udaya III	44
V	
Varuganavarman	38
Vijayalayan	38, 39, 43
Vira-narayanan	38
Vira-keralan	49
Vijayabahu	49, 50, 51, 62
Vikramabahu	49
Vishnuvardena	53
Vijaya	11
Vira Pandyan	54, 60, 61
Vira Somesvara	57
Vijeyanagar	62, 63, 65, 66
Valagambahu	13
W	
Western Chalukiya	46, 50
Wassaf	59